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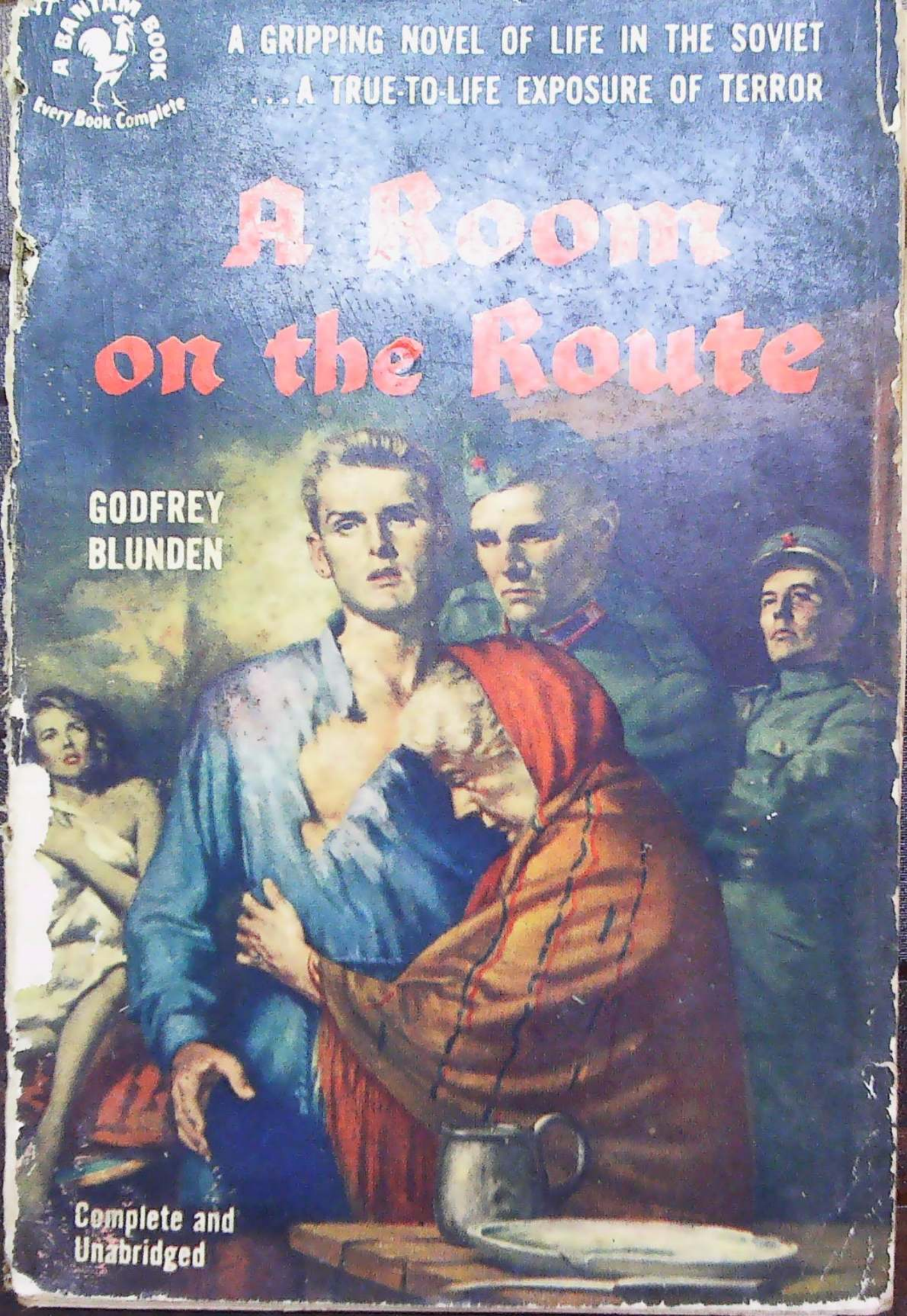
A Room on the Route

GODFREY BLUNDEN



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About THE AUTHOR

Godfrey Blunden, now living and writing in New York City, is an Australian by birth, but a genuine cosmopolite by virtue of his travels throughout Europe as a foreign correspondent.

A ROOM ON THE ROUTE has its source in the author's sixteen months in Moscow during 1942 and 1943. Interested in the lives of the Muscovites under Stalin's rule, Mr. Blunden made it his business to find out all he could, and he writes from personal experience.

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A NOVEL BY

GODFREY BLUNDEN

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A ROOM ON THE ROUTE

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

It may be necessary to remind certain Russian readers that this is a work of fiction. Although the author was resident in Moscow in 1942 and part of 1943 the people he describes are imaginary and have no connection with any living persons.

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FERGUSON

Mitka was very proud of his English. During the day as we drove back to Moscow (we had been to Istra) we would remember words and phrases, and make sentences in which he could use them.

"You have many Russian words in your English," he said.

"I never heard of it," I said.

"Yes, yes," Mitka said. "I have heard them in your speech with the other Capitalists."

"What words?"

"You say *trollybus*. Yes. I have heard you speak of the *tanka* and the *machina*. Just now you say *telephona* and *airrport*. They are Russian words."

"Russian inventions," I said, "like the Metro."

"True," Mitka said. "It is monumental."

"You must learn a lot." I said, "listening to us."

"Many words of interest," Mitka said.

Every few hundred yards (*Intourist* had driven us out to the scene of some atrocities at Istra) the bus would lurch into a snowdrift, the wheels would race and the vehicle would shake as though about to fall apart. When we had come through a drift, Mitka would look at me with a grin of triumph. "Son of a bitch," he would say, "son of a bitch." Like most Russians he commanded a vigorous profanity, but he was proudest of his ability to swear in English.

We had joined the old Leningrad post-road and we were now approaching the city.

"Would you like to meet one who can speak English as yourself?" Mitka said.

"Many Russians speak English," I said.

"But this one is different. She speaks only as the English."

"A woman?"

"I will take you tonight."

"After supper."

"Okay," Mitka said. "It is arranged. But it is only for you. I make you this possibility because you have a good mouth. A good mouth is very necessary."

"I shall not mention it to the other Capitalists," I said.

"You could bring something," Mitka said.

"Vodka, for example?"

"It helps all speech," Mitka said, "even the English."

That evening in Moscow I went for a walk. There was no moon, but the white streets shone luminously. In the boulevard which the "A" trolly car traverses, Mitka was waiting for me. We walked together without speaking. I wore my heavy leather overcoat and my fur cap pulled down over my ears. In the gloom I felt people brush past me, but the fresh snow made everything quiet. We turned off the boulevard and went down several side streets and then Mitka drew me into the shadow of a doorway and we waited there for some minutes while Mitka lighted a cigarette. I said nothing. I knew that Mitka was waiting to see if we were being followed. Then Mitka took me by the elbow and we crossed the street and stepped into a dark hallway. The outside gloom was cut off and we were in darkness. The hallway smelled cold with the smell of close living and *mahorka* and resinous pinewood. Mitka had moved away from me and I heard him knocking at a door. Mitka called. An old voice answered. There was shuffling behind the door and presently it was opened and a crack of light split the hallway like a flashlight beam. Mitka pushed the door

open and we stepped in. There was no one to meet us. Mitka bolted the door. Then he took me by the arm again and led me into a small room.

It was a very small room, about six feet wide and twice as long. It was neat and clean. A bed with an embroidered coverlet was at one end of the room. Near it was a small table with a white cloth. There were two old, elegant chairs and an old-fashioned sofa. The walls of the room were hung with photographs. Some of the photographs were sepia prints of family groups, but others were more recent studies and were of the same subject: a young man with dark hair and a brooding expression. The room was warm with the heat from a tiny stove in which some sticks of pinewood crackled as they burned. A small silver samovar was steaming. There was no one in the room when Mitka and I entered, but my attention was taken by a sewing basket which lay on the sofa and by a toy elephant made out of cloth with shoe buttons for eyes: it was a cheerful elephant.

A woman entered the room. She smiled at me and held out her hand. She gripped my hand firmly and shook it. I saw that she was a Jewess, about forty, I thought. She said her name was Rachel.

"You observe," she said, "we have not the place to entertain. Please sit down."

She spoke correct English, but with a marked accent, as though she had learned it from someone who had never been to England or America.

"Mitka told me you spoke English like an Englishwoman," I said.

"Not me," the woman said. "I understand how is my English. Mitka meant for you to meet Lizavetta Petrovna. Our Lizavetta speaks very good English. She speaks also French. But there are not the possibilities for the practice of French."

"Lizavetta Petrovna is of the former people," Mitka said.

"It is not necessary to say that." The woman spoke

quickly in Russian to Mitka. Her dark brows, above the large brown eyes, were drawn into a frown. She had dark shining hair. A Roman nose, rather than a Jewish nose, but the haughty sensual lips, the round shoulders, the high full breasts were Jewish.

"It is nothing," Mitka was saying. "He is a reliable spy."

"There is not such a thing," Rachel said.

"Ah, you Old Bolsheviks, you make me tired," Mitka said.

The woman stepped quickly up to Mitka as though she were about to strike him.

"Listen," Mitka said, "would I bring him here if he were not a good one? Besides he brings vodka."

"Vodka! Vodka! You would do anything for Vodka," the woman said. She seemed suddenly distraught, her large eyes opening wide beneath the black brows.

I acted as though I had just understood the word and brought the liter of vodka from my overcoat pocket, setting it on the table. Rachel suddenly left the room. I looked at Mitka.

"Pay no attention," he whispered, "it is all arranged. Rachel Semyonovna was formerly political. Yes, even a big apartment in the *Zmoskvorechye*. But . . . you understand. . . ."

Mitka shrugged his shoulders.

"Gondevay," he said with an expression of infinite sadness.

"What is this 'gondevay'?" I said. "Is it one of your Anglo-Russian words?"

"Certainly," Mitka said.

"What does it mean?"

For answer Mitka laid a thick forefinger at the base of his neck and made a sudden surprising sound like a pistol shot. He grinned.

Presently Rachel came back with the woman called Lizavetta. They were smiling and they brought dishes which

they put on the table. There was a salad of sauerkraut, a dish of hot potatoes, black bread and small hard pretzels. There was also some red caviar which I recognized as some I had given Mitka earlier in the week. I saw that they had laid out their entire week's ration.

The woman called Lizavetta looked younger than she probably was. She had fine ash-blonde hair which was braided tightly around her head. Her eyes, slightly tilted at the corners, were clear grey with large dark irises. Her complexion was fair and clear. She had the straight nose and the slightly raised cheekbones of the pure Slav. Her figure was buxom, but at the same time spinsterish. She was neatly dressed. Her teeth were even and very white, but one eyetooth was broken. Her hands were small with short nails and hard fingers.

"So," she said, "you have come to Moscow."

"Yes," I said, "it is the war."

Lizavetta said nothing. I complimented her on her English. It was natural and unstrained, but curiously old-fashioned.

"It is not remarkable," Lizavetta said. "My governess was an Englishwoman. At the School for the Daughters of Noblemen there was a Miss Graham for the English lessons. Rachel and I often talk in English for the sake of practice. When we are alone."

"I also talk to them in English," Mitka said.

Lizavetta laughed lightheartedly.

"Yes. You have heard?" she said. "Mitka speaks English. It is a very original English."

"It is the English taught in the schools by teachers who have never been outside the country," Rachel said.

"But, Darling Rachel," Lizavetta said, "it is good that they learn something. Did not Karl learn English that way?"

Suddenly Lizavetta looked sad, as though she regretted her last words.

"Karl is Rachel's son," she said. "You see his picture there."

She pointed to the photographs of the young man with the brooding expression. I glanced at Mitka. He made, with his mouth, a motion as though he were about to utter the sudden surprising sound of a pistol shot.

"You have never traveled?" I asked Lizavetta.

"Dear me, no," she said, laughing. "But tell me, how are you enjoying Moscow? Dear Moscow! How do you like our theater?"

We drank vodka and we ate little scraps of caviar while we talked about the theater in Moscow; about the Bolshoi being closed because of the bomb which hit the foyer, about the excellent performances of the ballerinas, Bank and Lepishinskia. I spoke of the Moscow Art Theatre and Madame Chekova in her husband's play, *The Cherry Orchard.*

"Ah, Chekov," Lizavetta said. "How wonderful! Are you not an admirer of Chekov?"

"And Ostrovsky," I said, "at the Maly Theatre."

"Of course," Lizavetta said, *"Truth is Good, but Luck is Better."*

Although she was no longer young, Lizavetta Petrovna had youth. I had a vision of her as a girl at a country-house ball in one of the long calm summers of the first decade of the century. A young girl in a white dress and a colored scarf over her tightly braided blonde hair, one who played Chopin, smoked a cigarette, daringly rode astride; gay, and a little fey with the foreknowledge of those times: a Turgeniev girl. It was an illusion.

I pointed to the jolly elephant.

"There are children here?" I said.

"No, it is Lizavetta's work," Rachel said.

"You understand, I make toys for children," Lizavetta said. "I make them out of old rags and buttons. That is how we live."

"Once it was I who brought food and found the house,"

Rachel said, "now it is Lizavetta. Every day she makes a new toy. The peasants who are now richer than aristocrats buy the toys for their children. That is how we have potatoes and cabbage. The peasants are rich today."

"Do you like my elephant?" Lizavetta said. "Look at his eyes. It is an elephant who will never forget, is it not?"

"Where did you learn to sew?" I asked.

"In 1937 I learned to sew," Lizavetta said. "But when I was young we did embroidery. So it was not difficult."

"She sews very beautifully," Rachel said. "Observe the stitches. Think of it: while she was doing her embroidery I was learning to throw hand grenades. In the Civil War I was a guerilla."

"Rachel Semyonovna is from Odessa," Mitka said, as though it explained everything.

"It was my ambition to kill a Czarist general," Rachel said. "Lizavetta's father was a general. And then we had the Revolution. That was nothing. But the Civil War, that was another thing. I cannot tell you the things I saw. I have lived and marched with the Red Army and I saw much death and many ways of dying."

Rachel spoke very proudly. When she had finished speaking, we were silent for a moment.

"We found her in a barn," Rachel said, looking at Lizavetta, who was gazing down in her lap, the light shining on her tight braids of fair hair. "She was a poor frightened one and I took her with me."

"And her parents?" I asked.

"Dead," Rachel said.

"It was all for the best," Lizavetta said.

"Ah, don't let us have any of the dialectic," Rachel said. She turned to me. "The dialectic is Russian because it denies all responsibility. Do you understand? After all, we find in the end that materialism is another God."

"It is often written about," I said.

Rachel looked at me with an expression of incredulity.

"But, Rachel darling, just think," Lizavetta said. "Where would I have been without you? And where would you have been without the Revolution?"

Rachel did not answer for a moment. She appeared to be momentarily lost in thoughts of another kind. Then she repeated quietly:

"Without the Revolution, where? In some ghetto, I suppose, like a thousand generations of my forefathers."

Rachel continued to be lost in abstraction. Lizavetta drew the conversation back to the theater. I spoke of the new plays *Front* and *The Kremlin Chimes*, but I saw they did not believe in them. So we talked of older authors; talked of Kuprin and Goncharov and of the defeat of inertia in the national character—the incomparable Russian conversation.

"Our only living poet is Pasternak," Lizavetta said. "It is a pity you do not understand Russian for he is untranslatable. Even more than Pushkin. His poetry is metaphysical poetry and it is very beautiful."

"Has he survived the war?" I said.

"Who knows?" Rachel said. "Already people are forgetting his name. He has not been the one to write anthems and win prizes."

"There are many anthems today," I said, "but none so good as the 'International.' And much pageantry. I was at the Easter celebrations. And I have seen the Guards Divisions kneel and kiss the flag and swear fealty to the Fatherland. And the Cossacks wear their old costumes on parade." I asked Lizavetta: "Do you like the new epaulettes?"

"They are beautiful," Lizavetta said.

"Epaulettes!" Rachel said. "That is what they shot her father for. He was too proud to change his coat. We killed thousands because their coats bore the mark where an epaulette had been."

"But I do think it is good for the boys of difficult social origin," Lizavetta said. "They always looked so incongruous in the uniforms of peasant soldiers and they suffered so much

for it. But now the new uniforms suit them so well it does not matter if they have the bearing of aristocrats even in the third generation."

"Are there so many?" I said.

"Yes," Lizavetta said, "inside and outside Russia."

"She is being stupid," Rachel said. "It is an idea they all have. The new chauvinism has no relation to the old."

"Have you brothers in the Red Army?" I asked.

Lizavetta looked quickly at me. "No, but I have a brother in America," she said.

"At last we come to it," Rachel said. "So it is out. She has a brother in America. She could send him a message by this foreigner."

I looked at Mitka. He was pouring himself a short glass of vodka. His round face showed no interest in the conversation. I looked at Lizavetta. Her head with the braided hair was bent down, like that of a child who has done wrong. Her fair skin was flushed at the temples.

"But, Rachel darling," she said in Russian, "I must."

"And if the foreigner's airplane should crash and they should find the address on his body?" Rachel replied.

"Then I do not care," Lizavetta said.

Rachel turned to me. "Lizavetta's brother went to America many years ago. She has a great curiosity to tell him of this new Russia that is coming."

"Don't you write to him?" I said.

"It is not an intelligent question," Rachel said.

I offered at once to send such a letter to America for Lizavetta. Written in English, I thought, it could go in the Legation bag. Or one of the newspaper correspondents could take it out for me.

"There will be no letter," Rachel said.

She came over to me and sat beside me on the sofa. Her taut proud bearing had relaxed. She was a good deal more than forty, I thought.

"You are a foreigner," she said. "You cannot possibly know.

You cannot understand. No one will ever know, for all the witnesses have been destroyed too. We only are left."

Rachel stopped talking and looked at Lizavetta.

"I thought my son Karl was dead," she said, at last. "But now I know he is alive. Do you understand? I *know* he is alive. That is why we must do nothing; because I must be here to look after him. We must do nothing."

"I am very sorry," I said, "but I don't understand at all. Is your son getting some leave? I thought Red Army men never got leave."

Lizavetta looked up.

"You will have to tell him now," she said.

"My son was sent to a prison camp," Rachel said. "I thought him dead. But now I know he is alive. So we must do nothing."

Lizavetta spoke. "But, Rachel dear, nothing ill will come of it. You are alarmed over nothing. Mr. Ferguson will take the address and there will be nothing on it to show where it came from. All that he will do is to tell my dear Losha that we are alive and well."

I looked at Mitka. I thought I detected a faint shrug of his stout shoulders. He was pouring another glass of vodka.

"Certainly," I said, "I shall take the address and when some reliable friend is going to the United States I shall ask him to tell your brother you are well."

An expression of gratified pleasure entered Lizavetta's face. It won my full regard.

"You will come again and we will give you the address," she said.

With Mitka at my side I stepped out of the dark hallway into the street. It was snowing lightly. We walked down several alleyways to a broad street which I guessed was Boulevard A. At the corner of Gorkí Street, by the Pushkin statue, Mitka touched my arm. We were alone in the quiet luminous gloom,

"I go," he said.

"Thank you for the evening," I said. "It is a rare thing to

meet Russian people. I think your Miss Lizavetta very charming."

"For a foreigner you are an intelligent spy," Mitka said.

"But I am not a spy," I said.

"That also is intelligent," he said.

"Well, goodnight," I said.

"Goodnight."

RACHEL SEMYONOVNA

Rachel lay in her bed in the little room trying to sleep. She lay there more quietly than if she had been sleeping, her eyes wide open in the darkness, thinking of her husband, sensing him close to her, his body beside her own, not daring to test the illusion by touch or movement, hoping, hoping for the feel of his rough hand and his warm breath.

All that was Ivan Romantsiev was there in the mind of Rachel at that moment.

His existence was as real as it had been during his living life, for in Rachel's mind, there was no vision of his death, nor even the fact of his dying, to give this existence finality. For that matter there was no vision, fact or idea of his death anywhere—no cross, no garlanded red star, no helmet on a stake, no identity disc or Party card, no record in book or ledger, no line drawn through name or number, no erasement —nothing anywhere of fact, but only the broken bootless body, the shell of his existence, lying anonymously with unnumbered others in a mass grave somewhere in the western steppe.

But at this moment Ivan Romantsiev was alive and real in the mind of his wife; and because there was nothing any longer that could be added out of his experience to make her knowledge of him fuller and clearer, at this moment his existence had probably reached its farthest pitch and in succeeding time could only diminish as the material of Rachel's memory perished.

The burgeoning in the dense competitive life of the Southern Ukraine at the beginning of the century: yellowing wheatfields, fruit trees, girls with colored kerchiefs around their heads, wild strawberries, fresh butter, vodka and honeycakes, the husks of sunflower seeds everywhere in the dusty streets; market places full of peddlers with tin kettles, wandering minstrels, drunken peasants, bearded Kirghiz horsetraders, Tajdiks in karakal hats, dark-visaged Circassians, Tartars from the Krim, white-faced aristocrats in fine carriages; down the roads ragged tramps, cloaked horsemen, a general in a coach, a traveling circumcisionist; villages with blue-domed churches and old women burning candles, kulak usurers, epidemic-ridden factories, foreign exploiters; the rotting tenement where he had been born, the dormitory shared with a score of others, the prostitute who lived behind the screen in the corner near the door, his old mother strong and vociferous, his taciturn father; the smell of rancid goose fat, garlic, fresh birchwood, *mahorka,* unaired clothes, the smell of lice and typhus and typhoid . . . the small ragged Ivanchick, the bright mischievous child, saying, as his parents spoke sympathetically of the prostitute lying long abed that morning—the child Ivan saying, "Ah, the poor one had a difficult client last night." And being soundly beaten for his precocity.

That was Ivan Romantsiev: he was the thick heavy life of the Ukraine, its color and ruthlessness, its humor and style. In the darkness Rachel smiled to herself, thinking. . . .

Thinking of the ragged child become a youth, sharp-witted, the strong peasant body balanced easily on the soles of his feet, the cap worn rakishly, the young baritone voice forming;

the pupil at the knee of the old schoolmaster, the wizened little man, of whom Ivan often spoke afterward, who lived in squalor and neglect, a disciple of Bakunin and Kropotkin, with his small circle of youthful *inteligants* in imitation of the great and because of a belief in progress; suddenly Ivan's vision widening, the world of ideas, of men of action, of the People's heroes, the dismissal of Fate, the dispersal of superstition, the idea of history shaped by man himself; the quick Russian mind, the true proletarian mind, knifing through the old compromises, rationalizations, resistances, through the sloth of Russia, to the one clear issue; the young body trembling eager to close the issue in action, the excitement of conspiratorial meetings, the never-to-be-forgotten first thrill of risking his liberty in a cause. Then a Prince had come to the town, bringing foreign friends on a hunting trip, and the Okhrana, who watched everything, had found it expedient to move the old schoolteacher and his pupils.

How proud Ivan was of having been, at the age of fifteen, a Siberian exile! The log-cabin settlements on the Lena River far north of Kakutsk and, in the cabins, the endless discussions through the long winter nights, the theories of Kautsky and Plekhanov, his first hearing of the Communist Manifesto; shaking hands with men who had made the Revolution of '05, "Here is a new Comrade. How young he is! Look at his hands! Here is one who has worked. A true member of the proletariat." Social Democrats, Social Revolutionaries, Maximalists, Anarchists, Syndicalists, all talking the day and night through, the small silent Dugashvili faintly remembered, the kindly Sverdlov firmly remembered; at length the impatience with inaction and confinement and the escape across the *taiga*, a thousand miles of swampland, mosquitoes, dense fir forests, to the thin line of railway; in the railway carriage the peasant lad and the aristocrat facing each other, the man knowing the boy to be an escaped prisoner, coolly eying him, the boy feeling the rising passion to murder, the aristocrat shrugging his elegant shoulders and turning to read a literary periodical; the

fur buyers who hid him under the seat, the hundred adventures across and through Russia to the open world.

For Ivan Romantsiev, the youthful exile, there had been all the world to travel in, everywhere food and work, everywhere Comrades believing in progress and the overthrow of oppression, libraries in which to read, parks in which to sleep, farms on which to work, ships to take him to England and America, languages to learn, English, French, German . . . the young jaunty Russian, always smiling, always ready to turn a hand to this or that, ready to sing, to dance, to make love. . . .

Rachel thinking of this now in the little room, thinking how many times he would have made love in those years, thinking of this with amusement and pleasure, because it was not so good as it is with me—you have said so, haven't you, and you never lie.

Then there had been the first World War, the collapsing imperialisms, the great moment approaching: and Ivan making the long illegal journey across Germany into Rumania and thence into Russia, at last to his own town, to the tenement, to the dormitory; and his old mother taking a stick to him, so expressive in her joy, and Ivan laughing, and his mother wailing, "What is become of a woman when she can no longer beat her son." And Ivan giving his mother money, many rubles, and being abused for it, and threatened again with beating, and explaining he was neither thief nor wastrel, but a Revolutionary: and the old woman quickly crossing herself and her face clouding with grief; Ivan looking through the squalor of his town now diminished by eyes widened in the world beyond, watching the conscription of the peasants, the wounded already drifting back, noting the desperate fear which underlay the corruption of the bureaucracy and the priesthood, seeing how it would soon all be swept away in a storm of violence such as had never been imagined. And then his arrest: the charge of larceny, the confession of identity to avoid a felon's fate, and Siberia again. . . .

All this existing in knowledge and feeling in the mind of

Rachel, now tossing in her bed in the little room. It was the fault of the foreigner who had visited them that evening—whom she had demanded Mitka find and bring to them—the talk of the Civil War, and the disturbance of remembrance deep within the heart.

Remembering now her adoration for her father, the stern, bearded man, firm head of a poverty-stricken family, the life of the ghetto, peel-papered rooms, peddlers, fortunetellers, Jewish festivals, the Talmud, chanting in the Synagogue; remembering the merciless whipping received from her father, her mother crouching distracted behind the door, her own screams in-bitten, the lash falling more heavily for that, and then flying out, her mother pressing a kopeck into her hand as she flew by, going to the cliffs by the sea and contemplating suicide—at twelve years of age how merciful death can be—standing there in pain, humiliation, wounded pride, feeling the impress of the coin in her hand, feeling it more strongly and finally yielding to it, a coin to spend. . . . That was the end of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur and all that.

Odessa became a place of reconnaissance and adventure; literature from the secret places of the catacombs, the residue of the *Narodnaya Volia,* Maiakovsky, novels of Revolutionary heroines, flaming stories of injustice and oppression, now keeping always with her tiny pictures of her heroines, Vera Figner, Sophy Perovskia. In two years the Revolution an actuality and Odessa in ferment: the Young Revolutionary League, White officers sitting in the cafés, police everywhere watching, the "Plot," the grand demonstration of Revolutionary solidarity: they would go to the cafés and at a given signal each would draw a pistol and fire it in the face of an officer, and continue firing until they were themselves dead; picturing to herself this moment of supreme exaltation. But, later, secretly grateful to the Comrade political organizer from the Central Committee who dismissed the Plot as one having anarchist tendencies and one which would provoke unnecessary reprisals.

The young delegate from the Central Committee had been very handsome, quietly experienced, calm, but with mischievously humorous eyes. She had come close to him that day the police raided the meeting place of the Young Revolutionary League, the excitement rippling through the building, the men coming in looking for places to hide their weapons for they said the police were shooting everyone on whom they found arms, the young delegate from the Central Committee coming in last with a small Browning automatic in his hand, looking quietly for a place to hide it, and she going up to him and saying, "Let me have it, Comrade. I will hide it here, see, they will never search a young girl." And feeling the small, heavy pistol against her stomach, the grip still warm from his hand, and the muzzle cold; feeling it slide down to rest between her legs, and his brief grateful smile, and nod of comradely appreciation. That was her first meeting with Ivan Romantsiev. Later she returned the pistol and he went away on other business.

French sailors had come to Odessa wearing little blue hats with red pompons, and she had leaflets to distribute. "Comrade, read about the People's struggle for Liberty," running, dodging, a wrist gripped, her man's cap knocked off her head, *"Ah, une petite apache!"* and laughter, then a young Comrade coming back and fighting for her, both fighting, scratching, biting, kicking, the sailors now angry, the gendarmerie arriving, boy and girl thrust against a wall facing sailors with rifles, the rifles raised and pointing at them, the young comrade very sick, herself thinking "I shall die. Let me live one day longer. But it is good to die for one's country. No, it is terrible. I don't want to die." Then, for courage, turning to the boy Comrade: "Comrade, are you a member of the Party?" "No, not yet." "Nor am I, but let us die like Communists." But the sailors not firing, something they did to the young as a joke, "That should teach you children a lesson." But taking her to the French headquarters, the room with many officers, the general sitting at a desk. "Take off your clothes," the interpreter, an elderly White Russian officer, saying. "Take off your clothes."

Looking at him and saying quietly in Russian. "You would do that to a Russian woman." "Take off your clothes, Communist bitch, you know it is the custom with prisoners." Her head hanging so that her black hair fell forward, her young face aflame, slowly unbuttoning her blouse, then looking up again at the general, some of the French officers turning away, the general, an old man with an expression of unutterable weariness on his face, motioning her to cease, "Take the prisoner away." The night in the cellar below the house and the guard coming stealthily, the faint light glinting on his fixed grinning face, struggling with the guard, knowing that it takes two men to rape a woman, then his breath on her neck and all his rude strength expended, pushing her back and swearing at her for a fool, and her suddenly weakening, and there was nothing any more, and his triumph was nothing, and there was no Revolution, no Russia, only despair and she was running somewhere in the night across park lands and empty streets pursued by the face of an elderly White Russian Officer.

Remembering that, as her first weakening to the emotion of fear, now in her bed in the little room, now a body full of vague fears, with larger terrors looming from the shadows, turning and tossing in her bed, fitfully balancing between waking and sleeping, remembering. . . .

The large rough soldiers, unkempt, hungry, lust-eyed, looking at her as she boarded the train for Nickolayev, and her fears, and calling to them: "Comrades, do you sing? Let us all sing." And she leading them and they singing, songs of the Red Army, songs of the Partisans, songs of the chain gangs, songs of the serfs, soldiers' songs, sentimental songs, all night in the train the soldiers singing, and in the morning her voice only a hoarse whisper, but the soldiers calling her by diminutives, and precious endearments, and setting her down on her way unharmed.

That was on her way to join the Partisans: resolved to be a fighting woman, joining the straggling ranks, marching through mud, sleeping in wet fields, hugging a heavy rifle,

never having imagined it would be so difficult, until the Comrade Commander caught up with her, taking her rifle on his shoulder and heaving her into a wagon. "How is it you are with us? You cannot be much more than a child. How old are you then?" "Eighteen," she had lied, being barely sixteen, fearful that the Comrade Commander would send her back. "Eighteen. It is not too young to be fighting for your country." It was the same Comrade whose pistol she had hidden that day at the Young Revolutionary League. It was Ivan Romantsiev, now a Red Army commander, the humor gone out of his eyes, but his peaked cap set at a jaunty angle, a Luger hanging from his belt and grenades thrust down his bootsides. But he did not remember her, not noticing that she was beautiful and brave, but she feeling that under his command she would never again be afraid.

Partisan work behind the enemy lines: skirmishes in the birch woods, ambuscades along country roads, new recruits from the villages, big raw peasants carrying rifles to liberate the land, herself wearing men's clothes, a leather jerkin, a man's peaked cap, trousers and boots, learning to throw hand grenades, to mend wounds, to ride a horse, to cook food. Ivan, dressing one day as an old peasant woman, going into a big town to listen to the foreigners' talk, she begging to go with him, but he refusing, taking instead Gregor Sokur. Returning with a pair of beautiful leather boots, Sokur wearing a coat so soft and warm to touch it was like a woman's shawl. It was a British coat, Ivan said, called a *warm,* but it was so short in the behind only a British or a Lett like Sokur could wear it, and everybody laughing, and she asking how he had killed the British officer and Ivan saying, "Here," putting his finger just above her navel, she saying, "With the Browning automatic?" and he saying, "Yes, how is it you know I carry this for I keep it always hidden close to my heart," and she replying, "You gave it to me once to hide for you," and Ivan looking at her and saying, "So, it was you," and looking at her for the

first time, and she blushing so deeply that she could not bear it, and going away and he following her.

So there was happiness in the midst of tragedy, being so young and of such ardor made the tragedy seem less, even as they overtook burned-out villages, deserted farmhouses where the mattresses had been ripped open and the feathers blown everywhere, men and women lying in death, bodies hanging from gibbets, ravens pecking at a dead woman's eyes, soldiers bound hand and foot and their bodies split from crown to breast with single saber strokes, wild dogs slinking in the cavities of dead swollen-bellied horses, wheatfields burned black by British incendiaries, village hospitals with men in every condition of decay and the stench of gangrene heavy in the nostrils: that was the background of their happiness, but they of such serious purpose and with so much faith in the future it did not matter, galloping bareback into villages, hammering on doors, crying, "What Government is here?" They were rough wild reckless men upon whom Ivan imposed discipline, at night the respected commander reading out the Party program, the intensity of their learning even in the midst of battle, Gregor frowning over his first lessons in reading and writing, all the seriousness of Revolutionaries, even to the execution of a comrade for having looted a peasant house. And Gregor Sokur bringing in some foreign prisoners for interrogation by Ivan, staring with admiration and wonder as he listened to Ivan speaking the foreigners' language, then taking the prisoners away behind a barn and nobody saying anything but hearing the sharp pistol shots, and Gregor coming back saying nothing but looking pleased, so happy that everybody was happy with him, Gregor grinning all day, his little blue eyes with the long fair lashes dusty like an old boar's, lighting up with pleasure. "All his life he has been killing oxen," Ivan said. "He has not changed his vocation." But she knowing that was not true, that Gregor was the most intelligent of them all.

Fighting the Atamans, the peasant bands of Tutunik and

Maroussia, Petlura and Makhno, fighting Galicians, Poles, British, French, Czechs, Greeks, Germans, the war dragging on and on, becoming more bitter, more cruel. Then Ivan given an armored train, becoming a commander of Red marines, hairy-chested men in striped tunics with belts of machine-gun cartridges slung around their bodies, indomitable men of great profanity, and Ivan's pride in his train and his immense seriousness, their victories at the railway junctions, living the rough life and happy with him, living a man's life for the Revolution, in any village an old midwife to perform an abortion. The Cossacks ended it, tearing up the rail bed behind them, surrounding the armored train, the fight that was the finish, the marines fighting until their last cartridge was gone and their last grenade, and then fighting with their knives, and the Cossacks taking them and beheading the survivors, but before that, in the evening, Ivan sending her with a message back through the lines so that she escaped, that being the last she saw of him.

But the battle of the armored train was vividly seen, above all, the figure of its young commander, Ivan Romantsiev with the firm muscular body and erect head, the humor now submerged by the responsibilities, the utter fearlessness among fearless men, the fighting in the greatest of all causes, but with discipline and direction, and the respect of his comrades always there, remembering this of her husband Rachel turned and tossed in her bed in the little room, for it was as though he were still living, and that time she had thought him dead was like this time now, and he would appear again, alive and laughing, his cap at a jaunty angle, and he would know what to do with Karl. There was a light now in the little room, a shaded lamp burning, and beside it the woman Lizavetta worked with her needle, casting watchful glances at her friend, pausing occasionally to utter a soothing word as to a child, Rachel then becoming calmer, lying more still and breathing more gently until the next spasm of remembrance. But now the

image of Ivan is vivid and real and he lives on in that battle ometime long ago in the Southern Ukraine. . . .

There are the swarthy black-jacketed Cossacks swarming into the train, leaping from their horses, shouting their great "Oorah," pinning him down and striking him unconscious, the long blackness, then hearing the White officer, turning over the bodies of his comrades with his booted leg, turning over Ivan, saying, "I want that one," and then the feeling of being slung across a saddle pommel and a horse trotting many versts, mud splashing in his face reviving him, Cossack oaths and a strange new language, then his body flung into a barn, a joiner's workshop, his body lying gratefully among the wood shavings, the feeling for his wounds, his wrenched thigh, the long ridge of swollen flesh across his skull, then sensing his whereabouts, feeling for an exit from the barn, fumbling in the darkness, realizing the barn had been used as a prison before his arrival. Then the doors flung wide and recognizing the uniforms of the strange soldiers, Greeks, the White officer ordering them to bind his arms, hearing his name uttered and understanding that they had identified him, the sense of being cornered and the rising passion to kill, the hardness coming his face and the sharpness of the tenement animal, the splanted peasant. And the White officer smiling and lighting a cigarette and coming close to him and blowing the smoke his face, saying, "There are some things you can tell us, nrade Romantsiev, but before we begin perhaps you would a cigarette," and quickly pressing the lighted end into n's upper lip. Ivan's answer an oath such as only the Red ines utter. "Very well," and the cigarette-end now deftly ssed into the membrane of Ivan's nose, "That is for my her whom the Communists drove from her home and ed," and now the cigarette-end into his eyelid, "And that for sister who was raped by Communists," the White officer sing himself into a fury and then into a vicious calm, saying, nce you will not talk Comrade Commander we will see how

you respond to our ingenious Macedonians." And then th
Greeks tearing his boots off, and trussing him up like a fow
and setting him squatting on the carpenter's bench, his leg
bound apart, holding him so that his testicles lay dropped b
tween the jaws of the old carpenter's vise, and the White office
standing by laughing, saying, "Now, will you talk, Comrad
Communist Bastard," and Ivan suddenly struggling again, b
the Greeks holding him, and one now slowly turning the loos
handle of the vise, bringing the wooden jaws of the vise close
together, the touch and the beginning of the pain, and th
swooning . . . the swooning to the sound of galloping hoofs,
and pistol shots, and cries "Partisans, Partisans," and the
Greeks dropping him and running and the White officer fum-
bling with his pistol, the anxiety and the fear crossing his fac
and the pleasure forever ruined, the door of the barn sud
denly flung back and a squat figure calmly aiming and firing a
the White officer, the officer falling and the blood gushin
from his mouth, and it was Sokur, Gregor Sokur, standing ther
with the big Mauser in his fat fist and the wooden holste
bumping his hip and another pistol in his tunic front, Grego
still wearing the old British warm now covered with horsesh
and dirt, Gregor saying, "Comrade Vanya!" and then th
other comrades untrussing him, but Gregor looking with won
der at the carpenter's vise, touching the handle bar with his fi
ger, looking at it with interest and speculation, saying, "Y
Comrade Vanya, we had heard of this place, many Comrades
have been here. . . ." then his jolly fat body shaking with
laughter and his little blue eyes, underneath the fair dusty
eyelashes like boar's bristles, bright with amusement.

For a long time he had lain alone and ill in a peasant cot-
tage (thinking of her, he had said) thinking over and over
this thing that had happened to Russia, balancing the damage
against the vast things that would come, hating the enemies of
Russia with a high cold contempt. Then well enough to go to
work for the Revolution, now organizing village Soviets, rous-
ing the peasants against the *kulaks,* justifying the Red Army's

food requisitions, one day coming up again with Gregor Sokur, traveling with Gregor, one day uncovering the wooden boards and the screw, "So you are also a carpenter, Comrade Sokur . . ." then recognizing it for the vise they had used on him, shocked and roundly abusing Sokur for being a murdering peasant, Gregor saying gently, "But I do not kill them, Comrade Vanya," and Ivan going on abusing him, and finally Sokur, bashed, saying, "But, Vanya, you have been ill a long time. There are many things you do not know. There are spies and wreckers everywhere. They will sabotage our Soviet state. Comrade Zemlyatchka herself says, 'Better ten innocent men die than one guilty man escape,' for, Vanya, one guilty man can betray the Revolution." And Ivan in great anger, but the round jolly-faced Sokur unmoved, shaking his head sadly, saying, "The injury has changed you, Comrade Ivan. You do not understand what is necessary. It is necessary to drain our country of all anti-Soviet elements," and Ivan, amazed at Gregor's new education, saying, grimly, with the new ironic humor which was what came to take the place of the youthful jauntiness, "I see you work for the Tcheka. I recognize the language. Go your way, Gregor."

The Civil War ending, the French and the British and the Americans and the Japanese and the Greeks and the Poles and the Germans and the Austrians and the Czechs and the Balts and all the others withdrawing before the victorious Red rmy, the enemy columns broken by force of arms, by the lutionary spirit and by propaganda, and Ivan Romantsiev nizing for the Party, moving from village to village igh the Ukraine, asking serious Party questions, asking ys casually after the whereabouts of a young woman called el Semyonovna, and one day receiving the reply, "Com- Rachel? Is she the one who is with Comrade Zylinsky?" finding her with Zylinski, she in that time, believing him , living with Zylinsky the engineer from Tsaritsin, and the ing. The two men meeting and the long conversation, lialectics, the future of the Soviet State, the coming world

revolution, the discussion that went on and on into the night until Ivan said simply, "I have come for Rachel," and Zylinsky saying, "It is for her to say," and herself saying, "I go with Vanya," and the quiet parting, such were those times.

Remembering the horror of Odessa in 1921, the dead lying in the beds where they had died of starvation, the dull stench of typhus in the alleyways, the strange atmosphere of the cellars and catacombs, hunger everywhere, her father dead, her brothers and sisters gone, her mother dying, unrecognizable with her shrunken hollow face, but her large eyes glowing with the final gratitude that her favorite daughter had come to see her. But these sorrows compensated for by the new serious work in hand, the illimitable joyous future, the new freedom, a country to rebuild, new industries, the Menshevik opposition dissolved, all who would compromise with the enemy liquidated, the New Economic Policy. Ivan called to Moscow and a new important mission, but Rachel thinking now only of their child, carrying the child in her womb into Germany on the important secret mission, and then the child born and their happiness complete.

Now in the little room crying, "Karl, Karl," in her sleep.

FERGUSON

The snow was early that year. In a few days the streets were clear again. There was little work to do and *Pravda* made dull reading in the morning. Workmen came and sealed up the windows of my room with oakum and strips of paper which they glued over the cracks. Every day I looked out of my win-

dow and read the thermometer which hung outside. It was a centigrade thermometer. The mercury hovered around the zero point. Every afternoon I asked myself whether it was worth while going for a walk.

After the newspapers in the morning, Madame Udanova came to give me lessons in Russian. She wore rubber overshoes now. When she came into my room she took them off and stood them by the tiled stove. She had stout legs and wore black cotton stockings. She had mittens of colored wool which she took off and laid on the stove and a grey coat which she hung by the door. Madame Udanova was disappointed about my progress in the language; but she was always glad to pass the hour talking about other things; about the weather and the ballet and what the foreigners were saying and doing (according to London, Von Paulus had reached the Volga, I told her). We talked always in English. She was precise and calm and only once did I observe a change in her attitude: once when she came late, saying she had had to console a neighbor who had received news of her husband's death. Then an expression of sullenness overtook her reserve.

"It is a year since my son went away," she said, "and I have heard nothing. Nothing."

"You will hear soon enough," I said. "In English we say 'No news is good news.'" It was obvious, I thought, that casualty lists are a luxury of victorious armies.

She was a nice woman and her life could not have been an easy one. I never hesitated to express in her presence any unfavorable impressions I formed about the Soviets. I was always careful to tell her, without undue emphasis, where I had been the previous evening. I was always going to the ballet. She, too, was enthusiastic about *Swan Lake*.

Sometimes Madame Udanova helped me with translations from the newspapers. There was a piece in that morning's *Pravda* about the work of the Partisans which I now asked her to read for me. It was a long piece, full of rhetoric and exaggerated claims. Nobody believed this stuff about the Partisans,

but it was important to follow the propaganda. I noticed, as we got toward the end of the article, that even Madame Udanova was a little self-conscious among all those high-sounding phrases. I said that would be enough today.

About that time we were beginning to receive a few newspapers and magazines, copies of *The Times, Life,* and others. I asked Madame Udanova if she wouldn't like to take some copies home to read. She thanked me, but refused the offer. I asked her whether she wasn't curious about the outside world.

"You understand English so well," I said, "don't you sometimes feel you would like to read about an English-speaking country? America, for example?"

"No," she said, her face calm, but looking away from me.

"There must be many people here who are interested in America," I said. "Many people with relatives in America. Now that America and England are your allies it would be gallant to exchange letters."

"America and England should make a second front," Madame Udanova said.

"Is it forbidden to write to America?"

"Please, it is something I do not know about."

"What would happen to you," I said, "if you gave me a letter to America?"

I watched Madame Udanova's agitation and now I was ashamed of myself. Her large slack figure trembled and I could see that she was nerving herself for an answer to my question.

"Mr. Ferguson," she said, "I should expect to be shot for a spy. Only such people would write letters now."

"You think that they would be spies? Spying for what? For whom?"

"Please, you must not ask me. I am a teacher of the Russian language. I do not know about such things."

"Forgive me," I said, "I was joking. Please forget all about it."

"It is better."

"I mean, forget what I have said. There is the ballet; and at the Arts Theatre there is a play by Maxim Gorki; and we can forget about such things."

Madame Udanova put on her overshoes. I helped her with her overcoat and held out her colored mittens for her.

"Perhaps we could go together to the theater some evening," I said. "It might help my Russian along."

"If you please. It could be arranged. But first you must study more the case-endings. The case-endings are of much importance."

When Madame Udanova had gone I walked over to the window. I looked out on the slushy street and the broken pavement. I decided I might as well go for a walk before lunch. I went down to Charlie Sommers' room to persuade him to come with me. He was there with a couple of girls. Dynamia and Vitalia were their names. They were the usual girls. I said what about taking a turn round Red Square before lunch. We all went out together.

The cobblestones in Red Square were filmed with ice. The way they drive automobiles around that part of the city is simply crazy. We had to watch carefully in order to time our crossing and then we had to run all together. The girls laughed a good deal at that. The one called Vitalia grasped my arm firmly. A wisp of her hair brushed my cheek. She had fair hair and hazel eyes. She looked at me in that way and my heart jumped a little. It was a long time since I had been that close to a girl. I had rejected these Russian girls on principle, but one cannot be acting on principle all the time.

The girls spoke a little English and, of course, I had to show off my Russian. I pointed out to them the inscription on the wall of the former Church of the Virgin at the end of the Square, translating: "Religion is the Opium of the People." The girls thought it was funny of me. Vitalia said her mother went to church every week now. We walked down the Kremlin side of the Square past Lenin's tomb and St. Basil's down to the river. They were preparing for some kind of demonstration

and a detachment of the Kremlin Guard was marching down the wide road by the river. They looked pretty fine in their smart uniforms with the long overcoats and lamb's-wool caps. They were goose-stepping throwing their feet high up in front of them and swinging their arms across their bodies. As they marched one of them began to sing in a high tenor voice and then at the refrain all the men joined in. It was a huge volume of sound—strong male voices, untutored, rough, but musically true. They were singing the "Song of the Sacred War." The girls were thrilled.

Charlie had fixed lunch in his room and we were all pretty hungry, especially the girls. We had a good lunch and we fooled around, talking and joking with the girls for an hour. Then I said I had some work to clean up and left them. I was going to the theater to see the play by Gorki. The theater began early on account of the curfew at midnight.

BABUSHKA

It was proper for her to think of her family at this moment. It was proper to think of her late husband and of her son Ivan and his wife and their son and all the other children by her other children who had been born in this sunny, dusty little wooden town in the Ukraine. It was proper for her to think of her grandchildren at this moment and to say a prayer. But all she could think of was her room. It was all that she regretted, for it was the finest room in Nickolayev. It was a room which faced the sun with a big window and a balcony. It was always warm. Once the Communists had plotted to take it away from

her, but Ivan had come and stopped them. She was very old and she did not regret to die, but she had wanted to go back to her room just to see it once more, but the Fascist soldiers had not understood. They had seized her in the street with these other women and they had driven them all out to this place and they had made them dig the trench with their hands. The women were now standing in line above the trench. Some of them, the younger ones, were weeping. She wished that she could speak to them, because if you had something to think of, like a pleasant room, you did not weep. They were waiting now while the Fascist officer prepared to take a photograph with his small beautiful camera.

Grandmother Romantsiev was so very very old life did not matter to her. But Grandmother Sofronovna who stood next to her who was old, but not so old as that, was weeping because the lives of her children mattered much to her. One of her grandsons had already joined their Ukrainian National Army and had gone away. It had all happened before with Petlura, but they were too young to remember. They remembered only 1930 when the Communists killed all the Ukrainian nationalists and they believed in revenge. It was wrong. It was all wrong. When Kylenko and those others met the Fascists at the entrance to the town, offering them bread and salt after the traditional custom, she knew that it would bring no good. Then Kylenko had taken the Fascists to the building of the N.K.V.D. and the Fascists had been pleased because, they said, at this place they had found a complete list of all the Party members and information about the positions of the Red Army. Nor had the Fascists destroyed the records of the N.K.V.D. as Kylenko had hoped. She had known then that only bad would come of it. Everyone had known how bad it would be when the Fascists began killing the Communists. The Fascists went down every street calling at every house where a Communist lived. They had done this in her house. She had heard them kick open the door of the Levinskys' room and she had heard the Fascist officer demand Levinsky's passport which

Levinsky must have produced, because she had heard the Fascist officer cry: "You are a Jew and a Communist!" and this had seemed like a signal for the shots that had followed for they had killed Levinsky there before the eyes of his wife and child. They had found a list of the names of all the Communists. Some they had hanged from their first-floor balconies, and from posts, and many over the doorway of the Communist Hall, and for a week there were the dead hanging there under the eyes of their families.

The recollection of all this, of the great disaster which had befallen her town, made Grandmother Sofronovna, who feared for her grandchildren, weep. But Rosalia Lopukha, who stood next to her in the line, had only contempt for the weeping.

Rosalia Lopukha was young, the youngest of all the women there, and pretty in her dark way, but none of the bitternesses which had been hers in her short life were so bitter as this moment. Rosalia was deformed in one leg and walked with a limp. She was thinking now that it was this accursed leg which had brought her here to die. For if she had had a good leg she would have been somewhere enjoying herself like the other girls. The Fascists had made them stand in a line, all the young and healthy girls of the town, and then they had ordered them to take off their clothes, and a big fat Fascist who was a surgeon, they said, had gone along the line, pinching them and poking them with his fingers, and sometimes putting his hand in certain places, and this way he had selected all the good-looking and healthy girls for the soldiers' brothels. Vavilova and Gasha and Biela had giggled as they put their clothes on and Gasha, who had already been with a soldier, laughed and said they were very small and gave no trouble and were not like the Russians and for herself she could deal with a regiment of them any night. And all the other girls who were left were told to get their clothes because they were being sent off to work on the farms in Poland. All except Rosalia Lopukha. When the Fascist surgeon had seen her crippled leg he turned her away with scorn and had not wanted her either

for work or play. So she had gone home and then that day they had dragged her off the street and driven her here to die in a trench.

Death was not more bitter than life for Rosalia Lopukha.

The woman who stood next to Rosalia Lopukha in the line was in a state of extreme agitation because she knew that she need not die. Yes, she could scream now, before it was too late, that she had information, and they would spare her life. It was a mistake that she was here. Yes, she could cry now that she had information and none would know because these others would soon be dead. The thought that she had information to trade for her life had come to her only a few moments ago and had put her in this state. But it was all in her mind and she did nothing because she did not know what to do. Her name was Valentina Zoschenko and her husband was a Communist and he was alive. For the Fascists had not been able to kill all the Communists. The *Active,* among whom was Andrei Zoschenko, had escaped and hidden in the woods. All winter long they had hidden there and now, recently, she knew, a messenger from Moscow had reached them, and they had taken their orders. It was certainly the Active which had committed the atrocity. The young German soldier who had been found in the market-place with his throat cut had certainly been killed by the *Active,* for no one else would kill a soldier that way. It was the death of this young soldier, in this way, which had enraged the German commandant, who was an old general of the last war, and caused him to announce that the townspeople would be responsible for the lives of all the soldiers in that town, and that for every soldier thus killed he would execute ten townspeople as a reprisal; and as he had made the announcement he had sent his soldiers among them, grabbing women here and there, grabbing her and all these others, and bringing them here to be executed, the first ten hostages. She knew that the *Active* would kill more Fascist soldiers, and the stupid foreign Fascists, and their stupid commandant, would believe that it was the townspeople. They would say that

the people were restless or in revolt and they would go on taking hostages and carrying out reprisals, ten townspeople like herself for every one of their own, and this would go on in every Ukrainian town and village, until the Ukrainians hated and feared the Fascists so much that they forgot how much they disliked the Communists, and this would be as the Active had planned.

A few moments before it had come to Valentina Zoschenko that if she told the Fascists about this they might spare her life and now she was in mortal agitation.

There were five other women and a small girl standing above that shallow trench. The small girl was holding her mother's hand. All of the women, except Grandmother Romantsiev, were in a state of despair, grief, fear, bitterness, and a little astonishment. Only Grandmother Romantsiev, who was so very very old, was at peace, thinking of her room, the room that faced the sun, the sun making light patterns on the floor in the morning, happy that this was the end.

At that moment the young Fascist officer had his camera adjusted to register this interesting play of emotions and signalled to the executioners to fire. Neither the young officer, nor his commandant, had ever heard of Clausewitz' theory of the function of peasantry in war, but the theory had been studied in Moscow.

FERGUSON

The theater was unheated, but the performance was superb. They do these things really well. After the first act I went out.

There were still people standing in the street bidding for tickets. I gave the stub of my ticket to a young man in a leather overcoat. Then I walked down the Kamergerski Pereulok and turned into the Bolshaya Dmitrovka. It was dark and gusts of wet snow blew around my feet. I looked for Mitka, but I did not hope to find him. But suddenly he was at my elbow.

"Hello," I said.

"Good evening," he said. He spoke in Russian.

We said nothing more. I walked with him down Boulevard A. Presently we struck off into a side street. We were approaching the apartment house from a different direction. There were no cobblestones here and in some places the half-frozen puddles stretched from wall to wall. The streets were unlighted and the buildings blacked-out. Mitka touched me on the sleeve and we stepped into a doorway. We were in a hall lit by a faint light. I looked round trying to fix the place in my memory. The walls were grey and soiled by the hands of countless numbers of people who had passed that way to go up the wooden stairway to higher floors. At boot level, damp had flaked away the paint. The floor was stone, or cement, dark with heel-prints of dirt left by those before us. But the doorway through which we had come bore the pretensions of another age. It was a massive wooden door. It had not been painted for a score of years and in some places the intricate fret-worked mouldings had rotted away. It was a handsome door for such a humble dwelling, but then the imposing facade had always been with them.

I had a better idea of the apartment building this night. I could sense better the close intimate life it housed. There was the smell of cooking, of boiled noodles and the sweetish smell of black bread, and old washed clothes, and babies' napkins, and the smell of many feet and of *mahorka*. There were sounds of people moving. As I stood there, three small children came scampering down the stairs. They paused when they saw me and then, bright-eyed, prankishly, they began clamoring, *"propusk, propusk, documenti, documenti,"* coming over

to me, holding me by my coat and blocking my further entrance.

Mitka laughed. "They play the *propusk* game," he said. "You must show your passport. It is customary."

I took out my identity card and handed it to them. Now serious, and wide-eyed, they looked at the document, extended it to me, and then they all scampered off down to the basement.

Mitka laughed again. "They are the children of my comrade Kostia," he said. "They live below us here."

We went through a door leading off the ground-floor hall. A few steps along a narrow passage and Mitka tapped on a door and we entered. It was the same little room in which I had first seen Rachel and Lizavetta. But now it seemed to be overflowing with people, like a Marx Brothers comedy. There was Rachel, smiling at me and extending her hand, and there was the fair Lizavetta. There was also another woman whom they introduced as Mary. There was a short stout man called Gregor.

The little room was very bright. The small stove was burning and the samovar was bubbling away. Everybody was brushing against everybody else, but nobody minded. Lizavetta took my coat and cap and put them somewhere outside the room.

This time there were many toy animals in the room. The elephant I recognized. There was also a lion and a tiger and a zebra. They were very amusing animals, caricatured with great cleverness in cheap materials, pieces of rag, a few buttons.

I complimented Lizavetta on her animals.

"Animals are dear to the hearts of all children," I said, "be they Russian or any other nationality."

"The peasant children love them," Lizavetta said.

"Have you read the Jungle Books? I shall never forget my discovery of Kipling."

"My favorite was *Alice in Wonderland*. Such strange human animals."

"It's an idea," I said. "The love of animals unites all the children of the world. Let's begin from there."

"Ah, the circus too."

"The Boy Scouts have a song," I said:

"I went to the Animal fair,
The birds and beasts were there,
The big baboon,
By the light of the Moon,
Was combing his auburn hair."

Mitka was delighted with the ditty and made me write it down. I was in an exuberant mood.

The photographs on the wall interested me. It is not often that you see family portraits in Russia. I felt that I was now on such terms with Rachel and Lizavetta that I could inspect the pictures without offense. The photographs which interested me most were very old sepia prints. Rachel saw me looking at them and she came over and identified them for me. This grim old party was her husband's mother, *Babushka,* who lived in Nickolayev and was now more than seventy years of age. She had been a very strong woman and very severe with her children, Rachel said, often she had beaten Ivan with a stick. Here was her husband, Ivan's father, in the uniform of the Czar's army in the war of 1904. He had been killed in the Civil War. Ivan's parents had been peasants, Rachel said, born in serfdom and counted as "souls" by an aristocrat who owned the estate where they had been born. But after serfdom had been abolished they had gone to work in a factory. There were photographs of Rachel's husband, Ivan, in his Red Army uniform, looking curiously remote and romantic, like all those photographs of men in that other war. But this Ivan was a handsome man, lean, sharp, and tough, there was no doubt

about that. His son was a very different character, judging from the large modern photographs Rachel had pinned on the wall; the son was an intellectual, more like his mother, with long black hair, large dark intelligent eyes, a very sensitive face. Well, that was the family.

Lizavetta interrupted us. She brought in tea in glasses with silver holders. There was a small dish of sugar lumps. The tea and the sugar I had given Mitka some time earlier. I had the sugar from the diplomatic shop and the tea from England. But it would not have been good form for anyone to mention who had brought this bounty; they were enjoying the greatest pleasure any Russian can have: they were offering hospitality to a passing stranger and they were offering everything they had and maybe something out of his saddlebags too.

I went over and sat beside the woman they had introduced as Mary.

"My name is Ferguson," I said.

"I know."

"You're not a Russian," I said. "What is your name, if I may ask?"

"Mary Anderson."

"You sound like an American."

"Do I?"

"You were born in America, surely?"

"In Minnesota."

"Then you are an American."

"I am not an American. I have a Soviet passport."

"Oh!"

"Yes, I am one of those."

I looked at her, wondering. She was plainly dressed in Russian clothes. She had mouse-colored hair tied in a tight knot at the back of her head. She would have been plain but for the large eyes which avoided mine. The grey eyes were interesting, but there was no effort to be attractive, no evidence of rouge or lipstick. She was about thirty-two or thirty-three, I judged. She looked a little prim, hard-pressed, inhibited, wor-

ried now, without the toughness and the ruthless survival force of the Russian woman, and this was probably her lasting American quality. She did not look political. She did not look as though she had ever been a Party member. The Communist girls had more assertiveness, more credulity, too; certainly they were less inhibited. She looked like the wife of an American workingman who spent too much of his money in saloons. Yet, clearly, she had been in Russia a long time. It was something which, sooner or later, I would know about. Another letter writer, perhaps.

"Is he your husband?" I said, indicating the short stout man called Gregor.

She looked at me with such scorn in her eyes, not deigning to reply, that I fancied I had committed a very grave error.

Mitka was making signs at me, which I interpreted as meaning this was the appropriate moment to produce the vodka. I took the opportunity to get up and go for my overcoat.

Lizavetta accompanied me into the passage outside the room where she brought my overcoat from a nearby recess.

"I've said the wrong thing again," I said. "I asked Mary if Gregor was her husband."

Lizavetta laughed merrily.

"Who is he anyway?"

"He is the *En-kay-vay-day.*"

"What! The N.K.V.D.!"

"He is an old friend," Lizavetta said. "He tells many amusing stories. Tonight I shall translate for you."

"Thank you," I said. "I'm sure they are amusing."

"I shall tell you something," Lizavetta said. She spoke in a whisper. "He is no longer the *En-kay-vay-day.* He has lost his job."

"Forgive me," I said, "if I don't properly understand."

"But nobody knows about it. Gregor is our protector. I have much faith in him. I have told him everything and I know that he will save us. Gregor is very intelligent. He will prevent the disaster."

Lizavetta's tense voice, the conspiratorial atmosphere, made me a little jumpy. I thought I heard a noise somewhere behind me. I looked quickly over my shoulder. Farther down the passage there was a doorway. I had the impression the door had just closed.

"Let's go inside," I said.

The man called Gregor saw us re-enter the room. He was a middle-aged man with broad shoulders and short arms. His head was shaven. His face was as broad as it was long and his small eyes were very wide apart. If one could have measured the distance between his eyes it might have been as much as two inches. His eyes were blue and he had stiff fair eyelashes. He wore a dark Russian-type blouse. He was looking at us as though aware that we had been talking about him. As he looked he put a lump of sugar in his mouth and he began drinking the hot tea, drawing it, peasant fashion, through the lump of sugar. He noted my intent gaze and he began laughing. I could see his broad heavy shoulders shaking. He made no noise as he laughed, nor was there any discernible humor in his blue eyes.

I noticed that the American girl remained a little apart from the others. She was looking starkly down into her lap where she had some knitting. Her thin arms were moving rhythmically as she slipped the stitches, but with a tension that made me want to halt the movement.

I turned to Lizavetta. For the sake of something to say I began talking about the theater.

"Don't you think that the theater has become the opium of the people," I said.

"Perhaps," Lizavetta said. She sighed.

"In other countries it is the cinema," I said, "but here it is the theater."

"Ah," Lizavetta said, gratefully, "the cinema! It is a great art, is it not?"

"It has great possibilities," I said.

"Do you know many journalists?" Lizavetta asked.

"A few," I said. "Why?"

"Do you think they would be interested in a cinema play?"

"I don't know," I said, "you never know what they're interested in."

"If there was a cinema play," Lizavetta said, "and if one sent it to England or America and it was produced that would be very good, wouldn't it?"

"It might," I said. "A movie out of Russia might find a producer. Russia is certainly in the news."

"I am so glad," Lizavetta said.

"You are thinking of your friend Karl," I said.

"Yes, He speaks English. I taught him. If they produced it in England or America they would want the author, wouldn't they? The author would be famous, wouldn't he?"

"They would use him, I think." I looked at Lizavetta. I wondered if she thought I accepted this nonsense. Her naïveté was disarming. She was looking at me seriously. The light was shining on her braided hair.

"I thought you said he was in a concentration camp, or something?" I said.

Lizavetta smiled. "He isn't," she said, "he is free."

"He has escaped!"

"Please, it is a secret. None must know."

"Of course."

I couldn't make sense of the conversation.

"Listen," I said, "what did this young man do?"

"Nothing." Lizavetta smiled. "You will take the scenario?"

I looked at her steadily for a moment. I was making a lot of trouble for myself. But I was free and it was so easy for me.

"Yes," I said, "I'll take it."

Her earnestness was irresistible.

"I shall give it to you before you go," she said.

"But what about the author?" I said.

"We will be happy," she said.

Rachel, who had been observing us, now came over.

"You are talking of my son," she said.

"Yes, Rachel dear," Lizavetta said.
"Do you know how he came by his name?" Rachel said.
I was a little taken aback.
"He was named for Karl Marx," Rachel said.
"Ah, yes, of course," I said. "A good Revolutionary name."

RACHEL SEMYONOVNA

Who remembers us? Only those who feared us are alive to remember us, for we are all dead. And these young ones, these young men from another generation, from another country, bringing good will and learning, what can they know of us (yet we might have changed their world!). Now, looking at him, one sees the earnestness, the effort to bridge time, the detachment, the scientific interest, but it is impossible to convey to them the feeling of our time; for the spirit dies, is crushed and withers, and cannot be revived in words. How can they know how we felt then, for we were young; in us was the youth of a thousand years, the energy of centuries of repression bursting forth; we were like a volcano held down by the pressure of the ocean suddenly erupting, boiling upward. What scalding energy we had! We could do anything, we had the strength, the physical strength of workers, and among us there was genius and talent and skill, the whole world was ours. How can others know the freedom we enjoyed. How can they know what it is like to live without the threat of starvation or exploitation, without the need of money or property, without superstition, without class inferiority? How can you, whose life is confined by the necessities of earning, of ac-

cumulating property, of acknowledging authority, narrowed by envy and ambition, compressed by prejudice and precept and precedent, how can you understand how it was with us, free from all bourgeois pressures, from want, from religion and moral codes, free to live and to love as we liked, free to work? Who has ever known such feedom? Who has ever been happier than we?

Rachel in her small room, quietly lost in remembrance.

Remembering the happiness with Vanya, how they shared together this feeling of freedom, feeling that now it was their mission to bring it to the world, to bring it to the oppressed and poverty-ridden. Remembering, with amusement, how their happiness was so great and so genuine that it deceived the Polish border guards, as they walked across the border, arm in arm, herself pregnant, so happy together, Vanya jaunty again, smiling at the guard and the guard smiling back, never thinking they might be Communists, and they walking through on the road into Germany.

Germany in 1923: remembering how this experience had moved her, this new country with the pretty little villages and country towns, the neat countryside so different from the great rolling steppe and the birch forests, tidy little houses and paved roads, so clean, clean, clean, painted schoolhouses and modest little churches with bells that rang sweetly, fat shopkeepers and austere *frauen* in dresses that were starched and hair drawn back in tight buns, and cheerful *biergartens* and the big country houses with the Junkers riding in carriages with hired men and mastiffs at heel. And the cities! Nothing like them in her imagination, the tall chimneys spreading like fungi across the landscape, and the big sprawling factories and the dark cobbled streets and the railway yards, kilometers of railway yards. And Vanya nonchalant, knowing it all, not heeding it, saying, "Many bourgeois here." And the meaning of the Revolution enlarging in her mind in these big cities: the worthless money, the milliards of marks dominating people's lives, the soldiers' widows everywhere, women turned

prostitutes waiting on street corners, grasping at Ivan's hand, imploring, the beggars and the gaunt men in old threadbare uniforms, the thin children, the crowded hospitals. Walking through this land, two innocent happy Russians strong in the conviction they were leading a crusade. The Revolution.

Berlin: Ivan organizing the Red Hundreds, she laughing at his new German clothes, so grey, so unlike the Partisan commander. Moving from apartment to apartment, avoiding landladies, watching always for the police. Ivan coming home late at night, taking the little Browning pistol from his shirt and putting it under the pillow, herself a courier of arms and literature. Remembering how proud she was watching Ivan instruct young men in the methods of the Partisans, how to use all types of arms, how to adapt wrong-sized ammunition, how to make and use hand grenades, how to blow railway lines, bridges, walls, arsenals, how to use artillery shells as bombs, Ivan talking to these boys, clear minded, efficient, a born soldier, loving the work, infecting them with the love of soldiering, of soldiering in a great cause, and they adoring and respectful, admiring the smoothness with which he handled the weapons and his sureness and above all his style, the Revolutionary style . . . talking to these tight-faced children in greasy clothes and uncombed hair from the factories and the alleyways of great cities.

Always there were strikes, trouble for the police and the capitalists, and Ivan there, walking through the police lines, calm, jaunty, fearless, even nodding impudently to policemen, and walking past their lines, idol of Revolutionary youth. Meeting the German Comrades, solemn-minded men, profound readers, remembering her private shame at her own ignorance, these men discussing Kautsky, Marx, Engels, Bernstein, Schmidt, Lenin, Boudin, Luxemburg, Michels, always with long quotations and analyses, Comrades fired by the Revolution, but tempered by failures, by the reverses at Munich, in Berlin with Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht murdered, in Saxony, fully aware of the power of the opposition, of

mercenaries, monarchists, Junkers, now reestablishing themselves, and growing stronger with their victories, but now believing in the need for discipline and organization and ready to take leadership from the successful Russians.

Remembering Herman Loeb, the serious Comrade who played the violin, how he played that night and how Vanya danced the Ukrainian dances, and how they were overjoyed with Vanya and embraced him, and how they all drank beer and toasted the Revolution, these emotional men, and she knowing all the time how Vanya felt, how little it affected him to dance, for to dance was a gesture, a style, not an emotion. Herman with his violin: it had been the opening of a new world for her, Herman playing music she had never heard before, wonderful music, suddenly realizing how she had needed music, suddenly knowing profoundly its logic, now feeling deeply even more than Vanya with his gaiety and his good comradeliness and underneath the logical cold-minded Russian.

Then there was Hamburg: Vanya in Hamburg and the rising quelled and no news of him, and the anxiety and the labor pains and Karl born in a clean German hospital and all those days of waiting for Vanya and no Vanya. Then the apartment house and still waiting and one night there he was, of course they had been watching her, and he joking with her, saying, "You still speak Russian in your delirium," saying nothing about Hamburg, but looking at the infant Karl and full of pleasure. But afterward she heard about Hamburg and she was able to see him there, standing by while the German leaders directed their men, firm in the belief that the Revolution had begun, a word here and there, this road, this railway, this factory, the bloody fighting in the streets, in the factories, at the barricades, workingmen in dark toil-stained clothes with rifles and pistols charging the police, the desperate fighting and the police spurred by fear, then the marines and the soldiers coming, workmen lying dead in gutters, blood trickling around cobblestones, small desolate heaps of clothes, and she could

see Ivan there, walking through it all, moving surely but leisurely through the fighting, indifferent to danger, quieting emotions, making the fight colder, because he was Russian. "They fought well, like our men, but it is hard, there is much organized opposition, and no space for maneuver, no birch woods, no ravines, too many good roads and motor vehicles and railway lines," saying this, saying nothing about the defeat, about the thousands of workers carried off to jail and execution, nothing about the failure of the rising elsewhere in the country, the failure of the Central Executive, the failure of Moscow, Ivan saying nothing of this to her or to anyone. And then Goriev coming to them one night, remembering Goriev, the handsome one with the mane of fair hair and the well-cut jaw and the big dark eyes, and Goriev talking, saying, "Too many Social Democrats, too many opportunists, too many old officers in the Soviets, too much parliamentarianism. They have been too long living on the privileges fed to them by their masters. We need to bleed the working class of these elements, we need to break their army and their navy and their police forces from within with propaganda. And we need to destroy the instruments of capitalist corruption." And Ivan nodding, saying little, and herself wishing to say, "Wait, wait," knowing that Goriev's words meant the Tcheka and the terror, wanting to say, "Wait until after the Revolution. Lenin did not purge the Mensheviks until after the Revolution," but saying nothing, listening to Goriev, feeling shame that she had been influenced by contact with the German comrades, too much talk, discussion, recapturing in her mind the singleness of purpose she had had as a Partisan, the unclouded certainty . . . and amazed at this new feeling in her which forbade her to talk, and immediately aware that Ivan, too, sensed it, more alert than she, with more intuition, he sensing the direction of thought, and saying nothing.

Then Vladimir Ilyich dead: that was the great shock, as though a part of themselves had died and was already mummified, thinking together, with distaste, of the embalming, as

though it were an indecency, something that might happen in an Eastern religion, how he himself would have opposed it, this turning of a man into idol. But the German Comrades praising it, already combining them now into the three Ls, Lenin, Luxemburg, Liebknecht. Ivan away for weeks at a time now, seldom talking of his missions, Bulgaria, Esthonia, always more reverses, more suffering, but with no illusion about the long struggle, the new grim ironic humor. Ivan with new passports, so proud of his passports, all kinds of passports with all kinds of pictures of himself, gay amusing stories about how the passport authorities were tricked, always something amusing about the ineptitude of the authorities, of Authority.

Gay Vanya in the time of the great strikes and the splitting of the trade-unions, everywhere unemployed men, hungry women and children, but discipline more discipline and propaganda among the soldiers and the police and Comrades imprisoned and tortured as it was in the days of the Civil War, only now she was older, and it was different, and there was fear in her heart. The general strike in England and then the Chinese Revolution and Trotsky banished and Zinoviev expelled. . .

Why must I remember this?

Why do I remember that which hurts most? I do not remember the pain of Karl's birth, but I remember this. Somewhere in me, and somewhere in Ivan, there was a dissolving happiness, something neither of us could admit, that was private and secret and not to be exposed, some inward shame that, had it been brought to light, would have burned in hatred and death. Then neither of us could speak of it, it being only feeling, the dissolving of a former happiness, and incertitude, a confusion, a morass.

Yet now it comes to mind, and I remember all the disgraceful things that happened. Why do I remember these things? Why not let the mind dwell on subjects of greater felicity?

Remembering the infant Karl, the sturdy Russian child,

dark-eyed, never crying like other children, Vanya's love for the child dawning, the brisk cheerfulness with the child, assumed for her sake, turning to tenderness and care, the strange awkwardness of man the soldier and the child. But remembering Karl in his baby carriage, she sitting in the spring sunshine in the Tiergarten, reading Marx on Revolution and Counter-revolution, reading with such absorption that Karl, falling out of his baby carriage, lay on the ground unnoticed, and the good German woman scolding her for being a barbarian Russian mother. Thinking even more deeply of the Counter-revolution. With Herman Loeb going to concerts clandestinely, Herman and his violin bringing much into her life, they finally becoming lovers, for sex after all was a glass of water. And Herman, serious and attentive, at last confiding in her, saying that he doubted the sincerity of the Comintern, saying that something terrible would come out of the destruction of the trade-unions, and she defending, saying the reformism of the trade-unions and the Social Democrats was the means by which the capitalist masters corrupted the workers, and feeling while saying it the weakness and orthodoxy, and he saying that at this moment the capitalist masters have not the power to give the workers the reforms they demand, therefore the workers will fight if sincerely led, otherwise the capitalists will use other means, and she saying the Social Democrats are our enemies, you are all opportunists, given to parliamentarianism, and suddenly afraid that the argument was not going well, but Herman only sad, that being the end of their comradeship. Being more and more afraid of this, of orthodoxy, of words and argument, feeling older and weaker than in those other days in the Ukraine, her inner feeling becoming rage and she thinking of denouncing Herman, telling Herman she would denounce him to the Party, and then not doing so, but months later this Gustav coming to her and asking for a report on Herman, demanding a report, saying Herman was a Fascist spy. And then suddenly her fury, the black murderous hatred in her eyes as she sprang up, hurling curses at the Tchekist, curses

from the Odessa ghetto, obscenities almost forgotten, an hysteria of cursing, ending in nothing.

After that there was the Five-Year Plan. That was something to take hold of. And Ivan no longer a soldier of the Revolution, but a businessman! Ivan dealing in ships for the Soviets, buying and selling freight. Ivan in a maze of new procedures, bills of lading, valuta, insurance, suddenly a businessman for the Soviets, and gay about it, his irony more in evidence than ever before, his immense seriousness in conferences with his colleagues. All that was sad. But the gigantic events in Russia were something to be proud of, every newspaper from Moscow telling of new achievements by the Soviet workers and technicians, and all this was important, except that it was discomforting to have it also praised by foreigners and democrats, uneasy to learn of vast food exports from the Ukraine to create exchanges in foreign currencies, the suppression of the Ukrainian nationalists, and stories drifting through about collectivization, about peasants burying their wheat and slaughtering their cattle. And then there was the letter from Ivan's old mother, "Come at once, Vanya, and save your old mother from the Communists. There are some here who would throw an old woman out on the streets. They want to take from me this beautiful room which is the joy of my old age." And Ivan laughing and writing to her, "Never worry, my mother, none can take your room from you, for you are an honorable Soviet citizen." And then they both returning to Russia, to Ivan's birthplace. But before that receiving another letter from the old lady, "But, Vanya, they would deny that I am a Soviet citizen. They are refusing me enrollment and they would have my name taken from the register." Then in Moscow Ivan going to his old friend on the Control Commission, calling for a report and learning that his mother was about to be deregistered as a citizen on the grounds that his father had been a landowner in the district, and Ivan saying, "This is crazy, my father was a peasant who worked in a sugar factory for sixty rubles a month," and the Control Commission calling for

yet another report, and then learning that the local Party official had affidavits proving that Ivan's father had been a prominent kulak, and Ivan suddenly monstrously angry, and his friend on the Control Commission calming him, saying there were many such cases, it is no longer a disgrace, especially since you have served your country and Party so well abroad, and giving Ivan powers to investigate his case. But nothing coming of it, the affidavits firm and unalterable, the case intact, but nothing more done about moving his mother from her small room, a sunny room with a balcony, a room much admired in this crowded town, now even more squalid, more dejected than Ivan remembered it, with hunger everywhere, and the fresh memory of thousands dying in the famine of a year before, the vast famine of which Ivan had heard only rumors, and nothing in the Soviet press, but of which he now learned much, and nobody anywhere remembering his father, nowhere anybody living where he had been born, but populations shifted, and whole villages deserted, and thousands carried off because of their resistance to the collectivizations. And Ivan still angry, still indignant that there could be such falsity in responsible members of the Party, demanding of his friend in the Control Commission a fuller investigation, and his friend suddenly remote and blank-faced, and after much waiting Ivan given a place to call upon, and finding his way there, through modern offices adorned with huge lithographs of familiar faces, past barrack-rooms of filing cabinets, to the inner sanctuaries, double doors covered in green felt, and heavy carpets, and there, in the tight uniform of the OGPU, a short fat man with a shaven head. Then suddenly Ivan amazed, "It is Gregor Sokur!" "Yes, it is me, Comrade." And greetings exchanged, and Ivan, a little mockingly, saying, "So the Tcheka has grown and expanded to this. What was a temporary thing has become one of the great institutions of the Soviet State," And Gregor saying, smiling, "You were always an educated one, Comrade," smiling without humor, his fair eyelashes standing out stiffly above the small

blue eyes, and Ivan suddenly noticing the changed Gregor, the training and the education, and Gregor not liking any suggestion of Ivan's former status of commander. "Well, well, Comrade, it is a little thing I have come about," and Gregor saying, "It is nothing, Comrade, I know everything," and Sokur laughing, his thick shoulders shaking, but no noise from his mouth, as he saw Ivan's amazement. "Yes, Comrade, there is nothing we do not know about, even your old connection with the Anarchists, but do not worry, none dare do anything against your mother since we have shown our interest in the matter." "But, Comrade Sokur, I wish to correct the false information that my father was a kulak." And Gregor laughing, his shoulders shaking, saying, "Those affidavits! Who would have thought that of my old Comrade, my old friend who was so tender with the kulaks," and Gregor laughing again and even Ivan smiling, but somewhere inside feeling cold and unnerved. Afterward standing in the square they had named for his old Siberian comrade Sverdlov, and looking at Moscow, the new automobiles instead of the droshkies, the paved roads, the statuary and the new buildings, the great Metro where workers were not permitted if they carried bundles, and not liking it, but not feeling very deeply about it, liking less the bread queues, the poor clothing, everywhere everything seeming far worse than Germany, thus far had the Revolution come since Sverdlov's time.

Returning to Hamburg, to the life of a bureaucrat, burying himself beneath an immensity of work, working all day and far into the night, and Rachel lonely now, with Karl a grown boy left in Moscow with Lizavetta to be educated, and viewing the times with dulled eyes, seeing only with uneasiness the fighting between the Socialists and the Communists, the parading Nazis, the petit-bourgeois Hitler, seeing police firing upon crowds and the pitiful ones lying in the roadway, bundles of old clothes, and thin legs scampering around the fallen and bullets ricochetting off the cobblestones, and nothing hap-

pening, no leadership for the workers, only Five-Year Plan, the second one now.

Then one day Ivan coming home with the news of Kirov's death, murdered by a Communist, Ivan said, and two hundred hostages taken from the jails and shot as a reprisal.

It is fear that I remember!

I remember all that gave me the sensation of fear, the inexplicable gripping of fear in the heart, the fear that could not be faced, was not tangible or manifest. I remember the collapse of character, the destruction of spirit before that fear, that which we could not understand, but to which we were bound until our last day, with nothing else to turn to, and no going back, no escape. It is the nameless fear that I remember now, knowing its name now, but not then. For the fear was also that which we then loved.

Remembering those years to 1937.

Waiting through those years, not bearing to read the newspapers, reading of the trials, and the confessions, understanding at once the confessions, the self-humiliation arising out of the corruption of the Revolutionary spirit, the not knowing where or how to turn, the abnegation, the bowing to history by the makers of history, the death of God, the mutilation and the self-flagellation, and always the fear and the waiting.

At Ivan's place of work one and then another receiving orders to return to Moscow, and Ivan stony-faced saying nothing, seeing the agony in the minds of others, prepared for it himself with laughter. The youthful Nikolai coming to him, weeping, asking for his advice, and Ivan in his cold furious pride saying nothing, and Nikolai going out and next day his body recovered from the river, soon Ivan alone of all those who had worked there, and the new ones shunning him, and no speech with anyone. Only the sneers of the foreigners, and some frankly conspiring to compromise Russians with their own OGPU, and Ivan's sense of shame before these foreigners, and the shame becoming rage against them, and pride deeply

injured now calling for redress, somehow, someway, redress and this becoming an overwhelming hatred for Russia's enemies, a pride in Russia's ability to bear mortification without complaint.

Finally, after many months of waiting, the curt note summoning them to Moscow.

FERGUSON

We drank tea and munched the hard pretzels. There was vodka with the hot potatoes. We talked idly.

"He has been to the theater," Mitka said.

"I have been to see *Lower Depths,*" I said.

"It is where they have the second front," Mitka said. "At the ballet and the theater the British and American Allies fill the first six rows."

"All the time he makes propaganda," Rachel said.

"You have been to see Gorki's play?" Lizavetta said.

"Yes," I said, "a second time."

"He was a great man," Rachel said.

"You knew him?"

"I went to every lecture. Afterward we would talk with him. He was our inspiration then. We consumed his every word. What a fine-looking man! What a head! He was lucky; he died before they could do anything to him."

"But they still produce his work."

"Ah, and what has happened to the character Luka? Once he was the embodiment of simplicity: if you believed strongly enough there was truth: that was Luka. Today he dispenses

truth with an odor of sanctity. There is the difference in our times."

"The play is naturalistic to a degree," I said. "Why, any of those actors could walk off the stage into the Kamergerski Pereulok and no one would know the difference."

Suddenly Rachel leaned toward me, her big eyes very bright.

"Nothing," she whispered, "nothing Gorki imagined could be as bad as it is now. Yes?"

"It is a critical moment," I said, "personally I don't think the Germans will break through at Stalingrad. But it looks bad."

"Always when I go to the breadshop I have something to give to those who stand outside begging," Rachel said. "You have seen them? Every day they are there pleading for a piece of bread. Today there was a soldier on crutches. He came to me begging for a slice of my bread. 'Go away,' I said, 'I have nothing for you. For then I would be hungry myself.' I want them to feel bad. I want things to be as bad as possible. I want their sufferings to be monstrous. Then they may think!"

"You believe hunger stimulates thinking," I said.

"Bah! Thinking: I want them to hate. I want them to hate so much."

"They are hating well enough," I said. "They are hating the Germans."

"It is true. It is convenient to hate the Germans. It is less dangerous."

"There is good reason for hating the Germans," Lizavetta said. "Just think of what has happened."

"Yes, yes," Rachel said. "Even I hate the Germans."

"You cannot trust the Germans," Lizavetta said.

"I liked them so much," Rachel said. "They were so kind to us. But now I hate them. It is true. In the street two days since, there was someone touching my arm. I looked and it was a stranger. A stranger wearing a long cloth coat and a cap smoothed and well-cared-for. When he saw that I did not recognize him he was afraid.

" 'It is I,' he said, 'Gustav.'

"Then I remembered. It was a queer feeling. It was like seeing a dead man. . . ."

"Goddam," Mitka said, "you think everyone is dead and then they are there, looking at you in the face, and saying 'Remember me?' "

"I remembered him," Rachel said.

" 'It is you,' I said, 'our Hamburg comrade. How can it be?'

"He looked at me and he said, 'Yes, it is me. You remember the house in the Mochernstrasse? How long ago is it now? Ten years?'

"I remembered him. I said, 'How is it you are here?'

"He said, 'I am here all the time in Moscow.'

"I said, 'So, in Moscow all the time.' I swear I could not help saying it.

"He said, 'Moscow is my mother and my father. How I love Moscow.'

"I said, 'Moscow is Moscow.'

"He said, 'Nothing has changed.'

"I said, 'Ivan is fighting in the Red Army.' I swear I could not stop myself.

"He said, 'The Fascist hordes will be driven back by the victorious Red Army.'

"I said, 'You were always a reliable Comrade, Gustav. You had much vigilance.' He was afraid.

" 'It is the same now,' he said, 'none can challenge me.'

"I said, 'The Fatherland must be grateful. I am sure the spirit of Kutusov and Suvorov and Alexander Nevsky inspires you.'

"He said, 'Let us meet again sometime.'

"I said, 'And remember Ivan Grozny. Remember he was a Great Russian.' "

As Rachel told the story Mitka was bright eyed with merriment.

He turned to me. "It is good, yes? Each other is the *agent provocateur*. Yes? Like a theater."

Mitka began to tell the story in Russian to Gregor. Rachel did not notice him.

"He was a good Comrade," she said. "In Hamburg he was loyal and obeyed the Party. He was our friend. But I remembered only that he was a German. How terrible to be a German in Moscow today."

"He is probably making propaganda," I said. "Perhaps they use him on the radio. I hear Pieck is converting prisoners of war to the Party line."

"Propaganda. Bah! When we have conquered Germany they will make Party members of the former Nazis.

"That seems incredible at this moment," I said.

But Rachel did not answer. The strange woman was lost in her own thoughts.

RACHEL SEMYONOVNA

In the daytime they would walk about the streets of Moscow and there would be an expanding of his spirit and she would be happy. But at night, sitting in the hotel room waiting, waiting the whole night through, there would be a shrinking of her spirit and the atmosphere would become unbearable. Sometimes he sat silently, staring into the aureole of light cast by the table-lamp. Sometimes he would talk and he would go over again the arrangements they had made for Karl, leaving him with Lizavetta in their apartment, leaving with Lizavetta the few objects of realizable value they possessed. Was everything done that could be done, was there anything else to do?

But all the time he would be listening. If someone came into the hotel he would listen to their footsteps as they came up the stairs and he knew where they had stopped. One night there were a number of heavy footsteps coming up the stairs to the floor below, and then halting, and the sounds of knocking, and then the *"Padom, Padom."* They had come for a neighbor. Sometimes he would sweat. Or he would take his overcoat and cap and put them on as though he were about to go out. Then he would take them off. One night when she could bear it no longer, she bringing out the little Browning pistol and laying it on the table, but he saying, "No, you cannot fight them," mistaking her meaning, for she had meant for them to die together, but it had not occurred to him, the sense of guilt being nowhere in him, only the sense of overwhelming forces, a turning of history, an incomprehensible fate.

When they had first arrived back in Moscow from Germany friends had visited them, but when they had seen Ivan's temper they had said nothing. Later the friends began to tell them. This one had been taken and now that one, everyone who had been on the Central Committee, except the two women, everyone on the Control Commission or the Org Bureau or the Gosplan, everywhere there were empty apartments with seals on the doors, and children wandering about, locked out of their homes, unfed, unattended, and now everyone thinking of themselves, and the small ones beginning to go. "Did you hear? They took Rykov last night!" And no one any longer walking in Red Square and everyone shunning the Kremlin as though the shadow of its walls were the shadow of death. Rachel remembering a history she had once read of the Spanish Inquisition, thinking only then in all human history could there have been an atmosphere such as this. Remembering Netkin, their neighbor, one of the thousands of dry-as-dust Party workers who had joined in the Lenin drive of 1923 and had helped swing the votes against the Opposition at that time, who had made a quiet career out of Party work, who knew all the slogans by rote, who had always felt secure, and

looked as he felt, remembering how suddenly, taken affright one day, he had begun cursing his *Khozin* openly in the streets, such bitter curses, like those she remembered in the mouths of frightened bourgeoisie in the Revolutionary days. Such was the atmosphere. The Gorievs coming back from Spain, and he still handsome, like Ivan every inch a soldier, his mane of hair now grey, but more handsome for that. Like Ivan, at first not believing, full of confidence, walking on air, believing in the purging. But in a few days already changed, saying, "It is hard to believe Bergin was a Counter-revolutionary," and, "How can Kutsov have been a foreign spy?" And his wife saying, "They are no more spies than you are," saying, "Wait until they come for you." And a week later both the Gorievs gone and their apartment sealed up. And the waiting and the waiting on and on, by four in the morning the room blue with tobacco smoke and by five Ivan saying, "It is not tonight," and sleeping.

And so it had gone on through the winter of 1937-38 until she had begun to believe it would never happen. And then one night they came for him, and he almost glad, smiling at her, embracing her, and going with the indifferent guards.

All that Ivan Romantsiev experienced during those months of imprisonment and interrogation and torture was felt by his wife Rachel Semyonovna; all that happened to him in fact he afterward told her, and that which he could not tell, because the telling was difficult, because of the pain and the mind that would not canalize thought, she felt by intuition.

The first thing to register in his consciousness was the stench; then there was the noise of many men. When his eyes became suited to the gloom he saw that there were more than fifty men in the cell. It was not a large cell and some men were in bunks tiered against the walls and others lay on the floor. Between them there was not enough room to place a foot and as he stood there he could feel bodies pressing against his feet. His eye traversing the cell found the source of the stench that was already sickening him; it was a large barrel filled

with urine and excreta. The crashing of the iron door behind him stirred the mass of ragged men. "Here's a big one," a voice shouted. "Here's a big guy, make way for the big guy," another shouted. "Welcome to the Palace of the People's Enemies," cried another and there was laughter and the guard came and hammered on the door. "Lie down here, Comrade," a man near him said, "the latest go at the end of the line. The old hands have the bunks." But Ivan did not lie down. He had expected to be placed in an isolated cell. There must be some mistake. One of the men, noticed him hesitate, said, "Lie down, brother. We are the living. Do not despise us. You will soon think differently." "I expected solitary confinement," Ivan said. "Ah," the man said, "you thought yourself that important. The isolator is for the condemned. From the isolator they go to the cellar. They have many interesting devices for those in the isolators." Another man shouted, "There is no *oopravneovka* here," rousing more grim laughter. Ivan shrugged his shoulders and lay down in the small place made for him at the end of the line. The men began to snore, some groaned, one near him was quietly sobbing. That night, the first night, was the only night that he ever afterward remembered clearly, the other nights and days were telescoped into one hideous nightmare. In the morning the guards brought black bread and water and he saw the gaunt unshaven faces and the ragged dirty clothes of his fellow prisoners now revealed in the thin grey light from the high barred window. Some of the prisoners stood around him mocking his neat uniform, and one saying, "Sell it now, Comrade, it will be worth much bread." And another saying, "When they call you, Comrade, confess." He remembered looking at this man with distrust, then hearing another saying, "Yes, confess anything. How they love confessions! I have confessed the life of my brother and my father and all my friends. There is no end to what you can confess, Comrade. Every confession saves a part of you." And turning away from them and the man shouting, "Oh, you can look like that, just wait a few days. Eh, what

do you say Comrades, wait until this fine turkey has his first interview, eh!" And the rough growling assent from a dozen hoarse voices. Then the guards coming in and calling men, the door clashing and clashing, always through his mind the sound of that door clashing and the hush that followed and everybody waiting for the sound of his name, and the pleasure when it was an incoming prisoner and not one outgoing. That second day, or was it the third, five, six men called and only two coming back, the first one returning white-faced, silent, and a man shouting, "See, here comes a confessor. Look at the confessor!" And then the next man borne in on a stretcher by the guards and tipped on to the floor, inert bloody stains on his coat, and a man shouting, "I will bet he refused to confess. I will bet a kilo of bread he refused to confess. Who will have me?" And all the prisoners looking at the man on the floor, the bundle of torn blood-stained rags, watching an arm appear and the slow turning of the bruised body so that the head rested on the outflung arm, and then the single bruised eye opening and looking at them. And then the bettor shouting, "Ah, he did not confess. Where is your bread?" Remembering sleeping next to the hurt man that night and recognizing the quiet controlled sobbing, and offering to bring water, and the sobbing quieter, and the hurt man saying only, "Thank you, Comrade," and pausing, gasping a little, saying, "I was a schoolteacher," and then into sleep. Remembering the door clashing and the young man, hardly more than a boy standing there where he had stood, and the same raucous voices jeering, and Ivan saying, "Be of good heart, Comrade. Do not take notice of what they say here. Their minds are corrupted by pain." And the boy saying fiercely, "Don't talk to me. I am here through a mistake. I am not an Enemy of the People like you!" And Ivan saying no more, but in the afternoon the young man called, and going triumphantly, his head high against the jeers, and then hours later brought back to the cell, quietly lying down, looking at Ivan and recognizing him, but saying nothing, his eyes wide open as though his

senses had been pulverized. The next day, or was it the day after that, the youth called again and not coming back. Those things he remembered clearly, but of his own agony there was nothing distinct. Remembering the hand ripping the orders from his uniform, the Order of the Red Banner, the order of Lenin, the enamel and gilt decorations which he had always worn proudly on his breast, ripped off and flung away, and the voice saying, "You don't need those gewgaws where you're going," remembering then the black fury which rose in his mind, and then the stunning blows on the face and the belly, and lying winded and weak on the floor, and the voice saying, "What secrets of the Soviet Union did you betray to the foreigners? Answer!" the voice repeating the question with a bell-ringing resonance, vibrating round and round in his mind. Hearing his own voice in hot denial, repeating the negative sound until it was without meaning, and the voice going on, "We have it all here, we have the documents proving your complicity, all we need to know is what you divulged. Answer!" And then suddenly taken from behind by others and held and beaten, deep deadening blows across his back and kidneys, each blow shaking him mortally, each blow seeming to reach up from his belly through his diaphragm to his throat, and his throat seeming on fire, and then fallen, lying against a wall, and the interrogator hauling him to his feet, propping him on a stool, saying, "You see how we treat the enemies of the people, spies, traitors. That is only the beginning." And Ivan feeling at last the salt blood coming into his mouth and the saliva running, and making a glob of spittle and blood and spitting it into the interrogator's face, and remembering nothing more. Coming out of the darkness, his good eye looking out over a mountain of flesh that was his cheekbone, sensing the throbbing flesh, the nose broken and packed with congealed blood so that he breathed through his mouth, the ribs suddenly excruciatingly painful, glad-feeling the pain, knowing only that they were cracked and not broken, and his head throbbing and then the stench and quietly retch-

ing, his body shaking with the dryness and the thirst and nothing to vomit. And through his delirium saying, "I will not confess! I will not confess!" Knowing that was the turning point. That was the end of Authority, of the State and Revolution, and the withering away. Saying to himself, if I confess they will kill me. They will kill me when I confess. It is different with me, because I could not become a sycophant, I would not serve under the whip, I would kill, I am a rebel. Therefore they will kill me anyhow. Saying all these things, and now, from somewhere inside him, the old ironic humor coming up, the courage to jeer at his interrogators, to make fun of them. And the laughter coming through his battered lips, and for that being made to stand in the corridor, listening to the shrieks and groans, and every fifth time the guard passing him putting the heel of his boot down on Ivan's toes, then lunging at the guard, but the rifle butt delivered sickeningly in the pit of his stomach, and standing there again, and now every third time the heel coming down on his toes, crushing his toes so that the blood seeped out of his boot soles, and at last falling there, his feet unable to bear him any longer. "Who was your accomplice?" the phrase repeating itself, going on and on and the desire to end it all and to confess, confess what? confess anything, anything to end it, thinking of the cellar stairway with pleasure, the few steps downward and the sharp pistol shot and his body sprawled out on the floor of the cellar, heaped up with the others in the death van, and the last quiet journey to the grave. Thinking of this more and more, with desire and pleasure, but somewhere in him the grim humor, the jeering hatred coming up, making him say, "Plekhanov, Kropotkin, Sverdlov, Lenin, they were my accomplices," and this seeming to satisfy them, and he laughing behind the swollen mask of his face, and they producing the fine long document, and putting it before him, and reading it, "To Comrade Yzhov . . ." and laughing inwardly at the long list of crimes he pleaded guilty to, the list that filled page after

page down to "notwithstanding I beg clemency," and the place for him to sign, and suddenly taking the pen and signing, but quickly inscribing below his name, the words, "under torture," and the satisfied smile of the interrogator turning to rage as he saw his fine sheet disfigured, and then the beating again, it taking four of them to hold him now, the smashing blows across the belly with the Bozom bottle, the agony beyond anything imagined, suddenly his belly breaking and falling outward, and his bladder suddenly riven with blood . . . the return to half-consciousness, sensing his body's agony, the hernia weakening him, the pain of being unable to micturate and losing consciousness again. And coming again to consciousness, the slamming of the prison door always there in the back of his mind, the slammed door, the shouted name, the guards at his side, all this again, and saying to himself, yes I will sign today, I will sign. But then the guards not coming for him, and the long time lying there, lying there for days without number, with buckets of water to drench his fever, and the mind that was clear but uncanalized. Remembering the long waiting and the prisoners becoming noisier, more of them and more shouting so that the guards had to hammer the door more often, and the guard who came in with a mirror and nailing the mirror to the wall, and the gaunt, bearded men looking in the mirror and not recognizing themselves, and the grim jests. Looking in the mirror and not knowing the haggard, battered man who looked out at him, seeing for the first time his pure white hair. Then the guards coming at last for him, and going to some place he had not been to before, the pain of his hurts magnifying with the movement of his body, and all the talking again, and not hearing any of it, saying, "Let me sign, I will sign . . ." And sitting there in this place until the orderly told him to move on. "But where are my guards? Where am I to go?" And the orderly saying, "I don't know, Comrade, where you are going, but you must go. The Court is closed." And then getting up and

walking out, and it was evening and it was late spring, the lovely spring of Moscow, the streets clear of snow and the air brisk, and he was free.

MARY ANDERSON

Yes, Mr. Ferguson, my name is Mary Anderson and I was born in Minnesota. But I am not, and have never been, a Communist. It is true that my father belonged to a trade-union. He was a carpenter and he worked in many cities in America. But he was not a Communist. I expect that my father is still alive, but we have not corresponded for many years. I sometimes wonder what he thinks when he reads in his newspaper about the war in Russia. Probably he thinks I am dead. I used to live with an aunt in Brooklyn and I had a job at Macy's. I was very young then and so was Robert. But Robert was already a member of the Communist Party. He used to talk just like my father. Robert was born in Russia, but his parents left before the Civil War. They were Jewish immigrants, but Robert was a naturalized American and he had been to an American school and he talked and dressed just like an American. Yet he pretended to be angry with his parents for having left Russia and he always wanted to go back. I used to think that was why he was so much of a Communist. Robert was very smart at school and he had a good job when I met him. We used to go to the movies and we had our own places where we ate. We used to go to lunch-counters, but once I remember we went to Luchow's. I was very much in love with Robert and we were married when I was only nineteen

and he was twenty-one. We lived with my aunt for a while and then we had our own apartment. When I think of that apartment I am thinking how happy we were; I am thinking of my tiny kitchen and all the canned food I had, and the bathroom with the shower, and the heating system in winter. It was only a one-room apartment, but it was luxurious, and we paid only thirty dollars a month. It was during this time that my two sons were born. After Johnny arrived the little apartment was really too small, but we got along all right. Being a Russian by birth Robert was naturally very strong for the Moscow policy in the Communist Party and he used to say the A.F.L. and all those others were Social Fascists. About this time he got a job as an organizer for the Party which was going to form new unions everywhere. Robert was very sincere and many times he got into trouble and would come home with his coat torn and bruises on his face. The police soon knew him by name and we had a lot of trouble with them. Robert was very angry about the factionalism in the Party and many times he talked of leaving America and going to Russia. He used to bring home many newspapers with photographs and articles about the Five-Year Plan and I used to get very excited about this and I urged him to go. It was in the middle of the depression period in America and there was a lot of unemployment and distress. I didn't like it at all then. So one day Robert came home and said we were going to Russia. Robert had a mission for the Party in Moscow and we would go together with our two boys. I was so excited. We arrived in Moscow in 1933. We went to live at the Lux hotel. Nowadays, you have to show your passport every time you enter or leave the building and again to a guard on the floor where your room is situated, but then it was free and full of foreigners. We lived in a room on the second floor. There was no bathroom. It was very difficult at first, but meeting everybody there, and seeing Moscow, and Red Square and all the historical places, and all the Russian people, made it very exciting. We lived at the Lux hotel for six months and I was

always trying to get somewhere else to live, but Robert said it couldn't be done without official permission, it wasn't like New York where you could rent a private apartment. After a very long time—and I was almost desperate—we got a room in an apartment house in the Arbats district and we went to live there. Robert was seeing many people and they would have discussions all night long. But I was too busy to listen. I had to look after the children. All day I was standing in queues, or cooking for them on our little stove, or washing their things, or planning how to get shoes for them. We had no money and, of course, Robert had no job. All we had were ration cards and a certain amount of dollars we had saved. So, finally, I got a job at the radio broadcasting bureau doing translations for them. I was able to talk Russian by that time and it was not hard to translate from Russian into English which is what they wanted for their propaganda broadcasts. The children were growing up and they were very noisy, just like American children, everyone said. I was proud that they had been born in America and were like that. I think that was the mistake I made, paying so much attention to the children, because I know everything began to get on Robert's nerves in 1935. We weren't man and wife any longer, as they say. I was always too tired and had too much to do, besides it was different in Russia. We had our first big quarrel in that year. We would have separated, but it was impossible, because Robert could not get another place to live. Robert could not find another place to sleep so he had to go on sleeping in our room with the children and me. It was a big relief in 1936 when he decided to go to the Spanish war. I had not known what was happening to Robert politically for a long time, but there were all kinds of things happening in Moscow which one never knew about in America. Important officials were always being arrested and tried for sabotage and if you were a Party member you had practically no life of your own. I think Robert was secretly surprised by a lot of things about that time. Of course, he was still absolutely for

the Kremlin, but I knew that he was irked by the fact that they did not give him any work to do. So I was glad when one day he came home and said he was going to Spain. He was glad, too, because he wanted something real to fight for. I was happy when he went. From now on I was going to have much more freedom. My Russian had improved and I could write as well as read it. I had a good job and I lived quietly and I was enjoying the children. But the next year everything became very strange. There had been a lot of public trials, but I had not taken much notice because they were always Russian officials. But now there were all kinds of people. I heard talk in the streets. Some said they were killing all the old Bolsheviks, others said they were getting rid of foreign spies because we were going to have a big war. It went on and on and after a time nobody spoke at all about it in the streets. You heard nothing about it at all except in the newspapers. But it was a strange atmosphere. It was the time when I was most glad I was not a Party member. I had never had enough brains to be a Party member; it was the worst thing between Robert and myself; it was his great disappointment. But then in 1937 I was glad I was not a member. I was frightened, but I did nothing. I spoke to nobody. I went to my job every day because I had to have money, but I never spoke to anybody there. One by one they all disappeared, all the Russians who worked there and most of the foreigners, and new ones came to take their place. And then they went and yet others came. Sometimes there weren't any others and the jobs just languished. Nor did I speak to anybody in my apartment house, not even the superintendent. I often wonder how it is that I escaped, and sometimes now I think it is because nobody knew that I had taken out a Soviet passport. They all called me the American girl and they must have thought I was still an American citizen. I was so glad because Moscow at that time was full of little children like mine going around the streets begging because they had no place to live, their fathers and mothers being taken away and their homes sealed up. It was a terrible

thing. Well, it went on and on until the middle of 1938 and then it must have been all over because I heard no more about it and there was nothing in the newspapers. Robert came back from Spain in 1938. They had given him an Order of the Red Star for his fighting in Spain. I am sure he was very brave. But he was not wearing his order after the first week. He did not come to live with us. I sent him away. That was the first thing I did. I said nothing to him about what had happened in Moscow while he was away. I just looked at him aghast when he came to the door and I told him to go. He saw my face and I think he knew immediately that there was some special reason that had nothing to do with him, that I would have welcomed him, that we were friends after all, but that I did not want him to come back to the old apartment. He went away without saying a word, but a week later he came back and I took him in. He wanted to see the children. He said I had done the right thing by sending him away. In that week he had learned much. There was not one of his old friends alive, not one of his foreign friends, nor any of his old Russian friends, all had been taken. Somewhere, from someone, he had learned everything he could know. He did not discuss it with me. He understood how I felt about it and I think he was grateful and glad that I had saved the children. But I could see that there had been a big change in him. He had been expelled from the Party. That was the terrible shock to him after all his work and his fighting in Spain. I don't know what they charged him with, but I am sure he had been accused of being an enemy of the people. If he had come home three months earlier he would have been taken away too, but all the worst things had happened then, and they were not taking anybody any more. He came to say goodbye and to see the children. They had grown a great deal and the eldest is more like him every day. Robert said he was going away from Moscow to get a job in a factory. I did not see him for a long time. About every six months he used to come back. I saw him last a year ago. He does not look like an American any

more. He is just like a Russian. He wears old *valenki* and old *podinki* and an old fur *shapka*. He has forgotten almost all his English. We spoke only in Russian. He was unshaven and he was thinking only of bread. He is not an intellectual any longer. He is more like those you see about and like them he doesn't talk. They don't talk because they don't know, but I am sure that Robert knows, I am sure that Robert hasn't forgotten, even though he doesn't talk. He told me he was driving a truck and that he was going to Kazan because the Germans were at Khemki, only twenty miles away. He wanted to know how I was going to manage. He was anxious about the children. He could not help me because he was evacuating a commissariat and he would have bureaucrats riding with him. I told him I would look after the children. It was only last October, but it seems much longer ago than that. I shall never forget how it was then. The district Party Committees were calling for volunteers for the People's Army. That was how we knew how bad it was. The Germans were at our very doors and the Party Committees were gathering everybody they could to hold them back. Volunteers came in thousands to the Committee offices and it was pitiful to see them going off, yet they were brave. They couldn't even march. You could tell the old ones among them, some old Party members from the Civil War, because they tried to march and they sang strange old marching songs which the young ones didn't know. They gave them a few old army rifles and the old ones were showing the young ones how to use them. But, they say, they had no ammunition. When I saw these old men and children marching off I thought it was all over and that the Germans would be in Moscow in a few hours. That was when the N.K.V.D. was rounding up everyone. They had a list of people, and they were afraid of collaborators, and they just took everybody they suspected and sent them off to Siberia. Do you remember the German Volga Republic? Well, they had moved the whole population, nearly six hundred thousand people I believe, out to Kazakstan long before that, and they were a thousand miles

to the east of us. But it was when we saw the N.K.V.D. itself evacuating that we were really afraid. All the commissariats had gone. Only the *militsia* remained at their posts. The Metro stopped running and the streetcars stopped. The city was quiet. People with rucksacks on their backs began walking out of the city as though they were hikers on holiday. In a way it was like a big holiday. There was a kind of excitement in the air, some new stirring, something different from our ordinary life. I guess it was the relaxation of authority. People left their apartments open. Others locked up their apartments and barred the doors. Some people began giving their possessions away. "Help yourselves," they said, "or the Nazis will get it all." Among the factories there was great confusion. Factories directors telephoned to the commissariats for instructions and found that the commissariats had already gone. They presumed the Germans were already in the city and they began to give away goods from their warehouses and stockpiles. Afterward many of them were shot for having done this. Out on the Vladimir road, they said, big limousines were roaring past the stream of refugees on foot. At one junction, I later heard, there was a young captain of the Border guards who was stopping every car and requesting papers. Those who had no papers, they said, were taken away behind a hill and shot. There was a row of limousines beside the road they said, in which the Jews and bureaucrats had been escaping. Everywhere in Moscow you heard new rumors. People said bitter things about the Kremlin, openly in the street. I heard one woman say, "*He* should be shot!" and nobody took any notice of her. A woman who also heard her said, "Oh, such remarks should be reported." She was distracted. "But who shall I report it to?" she said. When I went to work I found all the doors locked. They had closed down the radio broadcasting bureau. I went home and I found that the superintendent had closed up the apartment building and had gone. I had no place to sleep. I was in a panic. I thought that the Germans would be in the city in a few hours. The Germans! I remembered, all

at once, that my children were half Jewish. I did not know what to do. (Mr. Ferguson, will I have the courage to tell you my story tonight? What will you think of me when you hear it? You are the first English-speaking man I have met in years and I am dumb in your presence. But I must tell you on account of the children.) In my desperation I thought of the American Ambassador. I took my two sons by the hand and I went to the American Embassy. There were guards there, but I went on speaking English as if I did not understand Russian and they let me through. I saw that the whole American Embassy was about to evacuate. I thought how fortunate I was. I had come just in time. The big shiny American automobiles were loaded with people, some of them Russians, because they were taking their domestic staff with them. I asked someone which was the Ambassador and they pointed to a stout dark man in a fine fur coat who was standing beside one of the cars. I dragged my children over to him.

"Mr. Ambassador," I said, "will you please take my children with you."

He looked very confused. "Are you American?" he said. "I do not remember you."

"I was an American," I said. "But it is not me, it's my children. Please take them. They were born in America. In New York. Please take them," I begged.

All the other people were showing their impatience. One of the big cars moved out of the gates. A young man who looked like a secretary hurried over.

"Everything is ready, sir," he said.

"I am afraid we can't take you . . ." the Ambassador began to say. He was interrupted by a woman's voice inside the automobile. I looked inside the car and I saw an American woman in rich furs, one of those women whom one used to see on Fifth Avenue. "Rich bitches," Robert used to call them.

"Martin," the American woman said, "please hurry. Everybody is waiting."

Then the Ambassador stepped into the waiting automobile beside the woman in furs. "It just serves those people right," I heard the secretary say.

They drove away in their automobile and I was left with my two sons. It was a terrible time, Mr. Ferguson, but one thing none of us who lived through it will forget: The Kremlin stayed with us.

FERGUSON

I gave up attempting to start a conversation with the American girl they called Mary. It was rather sad to observe her high-strung nervous tension among these more robust Russians. I guessed she had had a very bad time and did not want to talk about it, so I left her alone.

The stout man called Gregor was telling a story in Russian which I could barely follow. Rachel saw my confusion and came over and sat beside me. She began talking about her son.

"It is hardest for the children," she said. "In 1938 when his father was imprisoned as an enemy of the people Karl was shunned by his comrades at school. Yes, it was like that from the beginning; in the beginning they were treated with contempt, later, when there were so many, there was no contempt, only fear. It is not pleasant to be shunned. It was also my experience. After my husband was taken I was expelled from the Party and none would speak to me. I went to my work every day but there was nothing for me to do. At rest periods there was always a space around me, none wanted to speak to

me or to have me speak to them, not even those who had been my friends. But I was proud."

She paused as the others laughed at Gregor's story. Then she went on.

"It was different with my son. Understand please he was a very great patriot as are all the present generation. He was already a Komsomol. He hoped to become a Party member. How could he understand? Perhaps it was a greater shock for him than it was for my husband and myself. After his father's imprisonment he was denounced at school and his comrades treated him as though he were the typhus. They would not talk to him or work with him and his teacher pretended he was not in the class. They would not mark his papers. They would have liked him to go away from their school, but I refused him the permission. I sent him back every day, for I knew it was necessary for him."

"I thought the crime of social origin had been abolished in 1935," I said. "Wasn't there some statement about the sons not being responsible for the sins of their fathers? I remember I was very amused by it."

Rachel looked at me. An expression of hopelessness crossed her face.

"That was another thing," she said. "That was an old thing having to do with the Revolution. You will never understand, you bourgeois."

"I'm sorry," I said. "I'm very stupid tonight. I don't seem to be able to catch up with anything."

Rachel looked at me with the large dark eyes that could be so moving. She laid a hand on mine, smiling at me.

"You are just like my son," she said. She went on talking. "When my husband came home, that was the biggest shock of all. It was in the evening and he came to our apartment here. I was paralysed. I did not recognize him. He had white hair and a grey beard. He was bent over with illness. He limped. His face was scarred and broken and it had changed. It was

not the face I had known. That was what they had done to him. I fed him and nursed him. The effect on my son was profound. At fifteen one is at an impressionable age, is one not? And you must remember he was a great patriot. At first he said nothing, but he was always with his father, looking at him, always looking at him, at the scars and the sorrow in his face. My husband was silent, too. For a long time he did nothing. When he was able to rise from his sickbed he would sit in the sun, saying nothing, hearing nothing, lost in his own thoughts, sometimes muttering. My son would watch over him all the time, taking him by the arm and leading him indoors in the evening."

Gregor was having a great success with his story. Everybody seemed delighted. Even the American girl ventured a repressed smile. Lizavetta looked at me, nodding, promising to translate it for me. Rachel did not hear them.

"But time went on," she said. "It was already 1939 and then it was 1940. My husband was able to walk without aid and my son was absorbed in his studies. It was at that time that I was convinced of his genius. Yes, although I am his mother, I say it. You would be surprised at the rapidity with which he learned English and improved his German. At the same time his Russian was beautiful and in the tradition of the great writers. He would have liked to have become a member of the Union of Writers and Artists, but, for the time being, that was barred to him. He was very interested in the cinema, for he believed that it was the only vehicle which reached all the people in the world, the only medium of expression in which language was no barrier. He had a great message for the world. He was going to write a cinema drama in which the stream of Russian history would be presented for the understanding of the world."

"What happened to him?" I said.

"One day at a political meeting my son said to a comrade, in a not serious way, that the strategy of Hitler was very cunning. Now, it is so in our country that the enemy can never be right, never be clever. The enemy is always stupid. The enemy

is a fool. Yes, even when he is at the gates of Moscow! Even when he is on the Volga! So when my son said the strategy of Hitler was cunning his comrade leaped to his feet and denounced him. The instructor then shouted at my son. The instructor clearly was afraid of such things. He shouted to my son to declare his name. So that is how Karl's name came to be on the list."

"On the list?"

"It is a manner of speaking. In our country nothing is left to chance. Everything has an origin in something else. Everything has to be traced back to its origin and the source of the infection eliminated. The political instructor could explain to Karl how wrong he was. That would be easy. And Karl could admit his error and retract. But it would be necessary to discover how Karl came to have such an idea in his head. Because it is not possible that he could reach such a conclusion on his own observation and by his own thinking. No, there would be some influence working in the background somewhere."

"It sounds incredible," I said.

"It is not incredible. What I am telling you is the acknowledged method. They do not pretend that it is not their method. On the contrary. It is the pragmatic method, the rational method, the Pavlovian method."

"Pavlov?"

"Do not forget that Pavlov was a Russian."

I laughed at her solemnity. "Well," I said, "what did they find?"

"Nothing. That he was the son of an enemy of the people? That is nothing. There are millions. No, they could find nothing, but that would not cause them to remove his name from the list, and we knew that."

"How did you know?" I said.

"I know them. Besides the war had begun. But they did nothing, nothing for a long time. The suspense of waiting made my son ill. He was not a strong youth. He was sensitive.

A true Russian *inteligant*. Every day he grew thinner and weaker. He gave up his work. He was just waiting."

"Always you wait. Why don't you do something? Why don't you run away? Do something."

Rachel looked at me and in her sad eyes there was again the expression of hopelessness.

"How can we make you understand, you foreigner? You do not understand. You do not even begin to know."

"I'm sorry," I said, "but try to explain, please."

"In *Pravda* in 1938 there appeared a small official announcement. It stated that any Red Army air force pilot who escaped from Russia by flying his plane out of the country would be punished by the arrest and execution of all his relatives: his wife, children, mother, father, brothers and sisters."

"That's very terrible, but in the case of military . . ."

"Military, bah! We are all military in Russia. That paragraph was the first acknowledgment of the system of hostages which had been going on for years, and is still going on."

"So," I said, "you wait."

"Karl waited. They came for him a year ago. They came for him in the morning. They waited until I had gone to the bread-shop and they came for him. I would have fought them. I would have screamed. So they waited until I had gone. Then they came and took him. He was lying on this sofa. So they came for him in the morning and when I came back he had gone. He had not even taken his proper clothes."

"But why?" I said.

"They were moving out of Moscow everybody whom they suspected of being possible collaborators. They were afraid of collaborators because by that time they knew that thousands in the Ukraine and Byelo-Russia had welcomed the Germans. They had a list."

"But why your son? Why? He was no collaborator."

"My son's name was Karl."

"Named for Karl Marx," I said, "a good revolutionary name."

"Bah! What would they know about that. It was a German name."

GREGOR SOKUR

One day in the Sadovy boulevard I met Kolodub. It was years since I had last seen Kolya Kolodub, but, it is the truth, he was wearing the same overcoat. Yes, and the same felt boots. Of that I am sure. Kolya Kolodub is a provincial and to be a provincial is something I understand. Nothing had changed him. He looked a little older and I noticed that he had a full set of steel dentures. But so many have them nowadays that they are not distinctive any more. For myself I would prefer gold. But Kolya Kolodub had the same superior little smile when he greeted me, the same smile that I remembered I disliked so much. I used to say to myself: "What have you got, Kolya Kolodub, to be so superior about? *I* could crush that smile." But I was younger then. That day I could forgive him. I could have forgiven anyone anything that day. It was the first day I was wearing my new uniform. I had it straight from the department's tailors and the buttons shone brightly. The tailor had given me a good chest and shoulders and although I am not tall I noticed with satisfaction that I was only half-a-head shorter than Kolya which I did not remember having noticed before.

"Well, well," I said, "how is life with you, Kolya Kolodub?"

"Not so bad," he said, "a little worse than last year and a little better than next year."

They always say that, these provincials. We talked for a few minutes. I asked after his wife. She was well, he said, yes the same one. There was nothing else to say. You would not have thought we were old friends meeting for the first time for many years. Perhaps it was the new uniform. People are intimidated by the uniform nowadays. I could see that Kolya was looking at the gold buttons and the green piping on the collar. At last he said:

"I see, Gregor, that you still have the same rank."

"But, certainly," I answered, "but do not forget that a colonel in the *En-kay-vay-day* is above the rank of Major General in the Army." I did not tell the dog that I had had the rank only since the war began. Had the dog guessed that much? Naturally, it was a miracle I was alive. They had given me my rank because I had volunteered only to be sent to the front. That was what I had demanded: to be sent to the place of utmost danger.

"True," Kolya said, "it is the same." Then the old mocking smile came over his face.

He tapped me on the chest.

"Do you know, Gregor," he said, "I owe everything to the *En-kay-vay-day*."

"Do not joke here," I said. I was annoyed. Obviously he was taking advantage of me. I remembered that it was foolish to be seen talking to him here on the Sadovy boulevard. But he hooked his fingers inside my coat.

"It is the truth," he said. "Today I live in a beautiful apartment. Yes, Gregor, it is beautiful. It has two rooms on the second floor. And I live there alone with my wife and family. I have my job at the factory. Yes, my old job. Is it not wonderful? Are you not amazed? And I have these beautiful

teeth. No longer do I suffer from neuralgia. Listen, Gregor, I will tell you all about it."

"Come to my apartment," I said. "We cannot remain here."

"No, we will stand here and you will listen," he said. He took me by the sleeve. Of course, I could have freed myself. I could have crushed that smile on his face, too. But, after all, he is an old friend.

"Listen, Gregor," he said, "in 1937 I was living in my old apartment. My wife and I, our two children and my wife's mother. We had one room. Never mind, it was all right. Then one day the Corps Commander of our district came to me and asked me whether I would exchange my apartment for his. Now the Corps Commander of our district is a very important man and this one had a beautiful apartment. He did not say why he was willing to exchange his beautiful apartment for my humble room. I did not ask him. Would you have asked him, Gregor? You would have understood as I understood."

"Explain yourself," I said, "and refrain from making allusions."

"It was when they were taking everybody," he said. "The Corps Commander was certain his turn would come. He knew that."

"He was probably a Polish spy," I said.

"Exactly," Kolya said. "How clever of you to guess. But, then, of course, you yourself have interrogated so many. So many spies to get rid of."

"You are wrong, Kolya," I said. "What we did we had to do. But personally I saved thousands. Hundreds are alive today who might otherwise be dead, but for me."

"Naturally," Kolya said. "But this Corps Commander was not certain of being interviewed by a man such as yourself. Naturally, Gregor, since you are a man of great insight and there are few such. But because this Corps Commander had such a good apartment he feared that they would seal it up and leave his wife and daughter without a home. He had

thought of all this. And he had thought that if he had only a humble apartment—a room like mine—they would let it be and his wife and child would have a place to live. I understood all that. Although we did not speak of it. Then I thought: 'Why not?' All the necessary papers were made out and I went with my family to live in the marvelous apartment with the two rooms. It was very beautiful. At first my wife was nervous. But then she got to like it very much. One night, however, they came for me and took me away."

"I don't know why you tell me this," I interrupted.

"It is because, Gregor, I owe everything to the *En-kay-vay-day*. And I know you are a man of great wisdom. Too great wisdom to wish to bring up the past. They brought me into a room, Gregor, and gave me a form to fill in. 'Are you a member of the Party?' was the first question. 'Yes,' I wrote. 'Are you a member of the Red Army?' was the next question. 'No,' I wrote. And so on and so on. Then the interrogator read my form. For some reason he was enraged, Gregor. 'You lying son of a bitch,' he said, 'do you try to make fools of us!' And then he hit me on the jaw and my face was bleeding and I put my fingers in my mouth and pulled out an old tooth. Well, that has saved some trouble, I said to myself. It should have been out long ago. Just then another man came into the room. 'What do you think?' the interrogator said, 'this son of a bitch says he has never been in the Red Army.' And the other said, 'Say, what's his game? We'll show him!' With that he hit me twice in the face. This time I did not have to put my fingers in my mouth to pull out my old teeth. I was leaning forward to keep the blood off my clothes and two more old teeth fell out. 'Now, admit the truth,' the Comrade interrogator said, 'But, what do you want?' I said. 'I will do anything. But certainly I was never in the Red Army. I am a worker in the October Factory. I have always been a worker. I was a worker during the Revolution.' But I realized I had said the wrong thing again. One of them hit me so hard that I remembered nothing. 'Take him away,' I heard one of them say, 'He'll change his mind tomorrow.'

They dragged me to a cell. There were many people there. I did not speak to any of them. Next day they took me out again and the Comrade interrogator said, 'So, you have never been in the Red Army, eh!' 'No,' I said. 'Stop lying,' he said, 'we know that you are a Polish spy.' 'No,' I cried, 'I am a worker.' I said, 'I am a not a spy. But I will do anything.' 'So,' said the interrogator, 'you are continuing this lie.' At that he hit me in the face. Then he hit me again. And now, Gregor, I was spitting out teeth. I could have pulled them all out they were so loose. But, you know, they deserved to come out, they were so decayed. It was like hitting a pod of beans and making the beans hop out. 'Tell me what you want,' I said, getting up off the floor. 'I will do anything,' I said. 'You certainly will by the time we're finished with you,' he said. 'We know how to deal with spies here. You son of a bitch!' I spat out another tooth. I could hardly see. But, just then, the other Comrade came into the room. 'Stop,' he said. He whispered to the Comrade interrogator, 'Get that man out of here.' 'Why?' my interrogator said. He took a long drink out of one of those big bottles of Bozon which they always have around to refresh themselves with between their labors. 'Never mind asking why, just get him out of here,' the other man said. 'You've got the wrong man.' They took me to the top of the stairs and they said to me, 'Listen, you son of a bitch, don't you ever come back here. Understand?' Then they kicked me downstairs and I fell out into the street. That was where I lost my last tooth. As I got up I felt all around my mouth and, in truth, there were no more teeth. You cannot know how glad I was. All my life, Gregor, I have suffered from neuralgia. All my life I have been afraid of the dentist surgeon. Now they were all out. I went home and bathed in my new apartment and next day I went to the factory as usual. It was as if I had come back from the dead. The Director was aghast. 'But you are gone,' he said. 'But,' I said, 'they do not want me.' 'Go away from here,' the Director said. 'But, Comrade, I cannot leave my job,' I said. 'Have you a document?' he asked. 'Then get yourself a docu-

ment to prove you are free.' I could see that there had been the usual meeting. I was a spy and a wrecker. The Party Secretary had condemned the Party workers for lack of vigilance in harboring a spy and a wrecker. My friends Kalenko and Mikolov had been dismissed for lack of vigilance and it was only a matter of time before they would be taken. It was terrible that I should come back like this. I understood that, but how was a man to live? A man must work. Besides it was a good job. So I went back to the *En-kay-vay-day* and asked the man at the door for a document. He said there were no such documents. I went again and again. I told him to tell them upstairs that Kolya Kolodub could not get his job back again without a document. I showed them I had no teeth. The man at the door said, 'What was the name of the comrade who interrogated you?' Of course, I did not know. Then I started going back to the factory every day. After a time they got used to me being around and it was all right. It was all right all the time after that. They took the Director of the factory and the Party Secretary after that, but they never touched me."

Kolya took my sleeve.

"So you understand, Gregor, how I owe all my good fortune to you. My new teeth, my fine apartment, my old job. I owe it all to *you*."

"Very interesting," I said, "but it is a long story."

"Before you go," he said, "tell me Gregor. How did *you* manage to survive? As one of the witnesses how is it that you are alive today?"

You know how curious they are about finding an Old Bolshevik. He was smiling his little mocking smile.

"That is another story," I said. "Some time I shall tell it to you."

Another story! How could I explain my survival. Some have all the luck.

FERGUSON

It seemed to me that the man they called Gregor was a very good actor. He had told his story in the character of a certain kind of officer whose solemnity and self-importance provokes amusement. It was a parody of a type one saw commonly in Moscow, or, for that matter, in any country where the military had attained importance and power.

"It was the circumstances of 1938 which obtained for me the highest promotion," Gregor said.

He was speaking in Russian, but I was able to follow him when he spoke slowly and simply.

"After all, one cannot rise higher in the *En-kay-vay-day* than to have been the interrogator of Yagoda."

"Ah, he will tell us about Yagoda!" Mitka rubbed his hands.

"A matter of the confessions," Gregor said, "the confessions of the Soviet Traitors."

Gregor went on talking in Russian and now he spoke more quickly and I lost the thread of his discourse. Rachel, noting my difficulty, hastened to explain.

"You have heard of Henry Yagoda," she said. "He was chief of the *En-kay-vay-day* during the trials of the friends of Lenin."

"I remember reading about the trials," I said. "Everybody was puzzled why they all confessed. We used to think that they had been put under the influence of drugs, or something."

"Drugs?" Rachel looked incredulous. Then she shook her head. "How little the world knows about us."

"It is unfortunately true."

"Did not the world understand about the confessions?"

"Well, yes," I said, "in a way. We thought it was very Russian. A kind of Dostoievsky thing."

Rachel was suddenly quiet. Her whole body expressed a state of soft collapse. I said nothing. Gregor had captured the attention of the others with a new story.

"Please explain to me," I said. "Please tolerate my ignorance."

"Well," Rachel said, "it was like this. This little group of Old Bolsheviks knew that they were about to die. They knew that if they protested or made scenes nothing would ever be heard of them again. They would disappear and there would be no record. They had one chance of conveying a message to the world. They would stand trial and they would confess."

"Yes."

"They understood the *Khozin's* weakness for confessions, his desire publicly to humiliate those who opposed him, and his need to justify himself in the eyes of history. They planned to take advantage of this. You must not forget that they were old Bolsheviks educated in dialectics and with much subtlety."

"I begin to see."

"They agreed to confess that their political program was no different from that of the *Khozin,* but that their crime was a struggle for power within the Party."

"That was how it seemed to us."

"Ah, how can one explain such things to the bourgeoisie. Do you not understand that a difference on a question of power, an internal struggle for power, is nothing to Bolsheviks? In Lenin's time such an argument would have seemed ridiculous. The friends of Lenin would not think of a contest for personal power. No Bolshevik thought of such a thing. They thought only of the Party. It was the Party all the time and personal power was of no consequence. Perhaps they thought too little of personal power."

"They were a queer bunch of idealists."

"To confess that they had taken part in an internal struggle for power, while having no ideological quarrel with the *Khozin,* meant simply that they were being put to death because they were in the way of the *Khozin.* As a Party, not as individuals, they were a threat to his continuance in office as General Secretary, and their votes in the Central Committee might have lost him that position. For the friends of Lenin to confess that they had taken part in a struggle for power was to say that they were the victims of a struggle for personal power and that all that followed would be the outcome of this struggle for personal power. That was the message they wanted to deliver to history. And did deliver."

"I don't think it was properly understood outside of Russia," I said. "The struggle for personal power does not seem immoral in our capitalist, or realist world. Only the penalties seemed rather oriental."

"The friends of Lenin cared nothing for the capitalist world. Capitalism was behind them. Their message was for history. And it is written in history, because it deceived Henry Yagoda. It was Henry Yagoda who was entrusted to prepare the confessions, but he and his sycophants were not equal to the subtlety of the Old Bolsheviks. They swallowed the confessions whole. They accepted the confessions because they were of the same mentality as your capitalist politicians. It did not seem immoral or strange to Yagoda that there should be a struggle for personal power and that those on the surviving side, like himself, suitably rewarded, and those who failed, like the Old Bolsheviks, destroyed. So Henry Yagoda accepted the confessions and the Old Bolsheviks were brought to trial."

"Was it as simple as all that?"

"I speak only of the friends of Lenin, of the first trial, and the first hour of that trial."

"The official record . . ."

"Ah, the official record! It is a lie!"

"The Englishman, Collet, who was present in the court during all the trials, says . . ."

"What does he say?"

"He says the official record is a cunning travesty of the evidence. He says it gives no hint of the condition of the witnesses or the atmosphere . . ."

"The atmosphere!"

"Nevertheless, I don't see how your theory . . ."

"It is not a theory. If you could find the copies of *Pravda* and *Isvestia* which reported the first day of that trial you would see that what I have said is the truth. You would see how the whole propaganda machine had been set in motion to denounce and vilify these men for having plotted against the *Khozin* to seize power. You would have seen how fully Henry Yagoda had been deceived."

"Then . . ."

"But the *Khozin* was not deceived. He understood. He, too, is an Old Bolshevik. We can imagine his chagrin and his rage! We know that he acted immediately because next day the trial was all confusion and the day after that the newspapers had reversed their line and the Old Bolsheviks had become Traitors."

"Confusion twice . . ."

"How else could it be? Their plan was exposed and ruined. Think of the interrogations, one interrogator following the other without pause, the glare of the electric light, the questions repeated and repeated, the threats, the promises, the weariness and the need of sleep. Think of this and you can see that, having failed, with now no hope of warning mankind, and with their certain knowledge of the terrifying course history was taking, all these men wanted was death; yet before they were able to embrace death they were reduced, by duress, to the lowest function of their human condition, the meaning of their lives cruelly probed, their souls laid thinly bare, so that what they said made no difference, was merely irony or despair

or weakness, according to their various characters, and did not matter so long as it was soon over. And that was the pattern of all the trials that followed."

"And Yagoda?"

"The error of accepting those confessions, of permitting the Old Bolsheviks to register their message for history, even though it lasted but an hour or two, put Yagoda in their camp as a fellow conspirator. It cost him his life."

"An expensive error . . ."

"His life was nothing. More terrible was the change it brought about in the *En-kay-vay-day*. For, after that, the interrogators shunned confessions of an ideological nature. It was simpler and safer for them to obtain confessions of military sabotage, intelligence with the enemy, and other evidence that involved no risk to them. The interrogators were afraid of sharing the fate of Yagoda. Nevertheless many did."

Mitka had transferred his attention from Gregor to Rachel and now leaned over to me. He put his finger to his neck and made the sound of a pistol shot which came so surprisingly loud from his lips.

"Many gondevay," he said.

"It became necessary to obtain very good confessions," Gregor said. "Naturally I was promoted. Comrade Yagoda's confession was a model."

Mitka looked at Gregor with glee in his round face.

"Tell us, Gregor, how did you arrange the confessions?"

Gregor looked at Mitka and began laughing. His huge shoulders were shaking, but there was no sound.

"With Comrade Yzhov, the beloved pupil of our leader and teacher, replacing Comrade Yagoda as head of the *En-kay-vay-day,* many became nervous of their positions," Gregor said. "Thus they were not inclined to tolerate any temporizing or subtlety on the part of the scum brought before them. They felt safer when they secured confessions of a military kind. It was not so difficult as some say. Many prisoners were coöperative."

Mitka looked at me gravely.

"It was often said that in similar circumstances Marx and Engels would confess their mistakes," he said.

"There was no end to the crimes thus uncovered," Gregor said. "You would not have believed there could have been so much sabotage, so much espionage in our country. Everybody was willing to help us, to point out new suspects. And, of course, we had our own records going back many years. Even to the archives of the Okhrana."

"Everybody in Russia pulls a wagon," Mitka said.

"It was interesting to discover how many of our gifted physicians and scientists, for example, had been in correspondence with the bourgeois countries. Some were receiving strange books and foreign-printed magazines from Germany and England. Our young Soviet cadres, always on the alert for such traffic, had, over many years, assembled for us much evidence of this kind. It was all useful, especially in the remoter areas, when confronting village doctors or schoolmasters with their complicity in foreign plots, and in obtaining simple clear confessions properly drawn up and soliciting clemency."

"Thousands of husbands confessed that their wives were guilty," Mitka said gravely.

"It is true," Gregor said, "there were mistakes, but when the pages of history are turned with a firm hand there is not the time to correct trivia. I have always believed, with Comrade Zemlyatchka, 'Better ten innocent men die than one guilty man go free.'"

"How many mistakes in 1937 and 1938?"

It was Rachel asking Gregor this question, her voice vibrant, and none of the conversational irony in it.

"Tell us, Gregor, were there more than twenty million trivia in those years?"

The stout man was not perturbed by Rachel's intensity.

"To say twenty million is to repeat the lies of our enemies," he said.

"Ten million, then. Ten million trivia."

Mitka looked at me gravely.

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"To say twenty million is to repeat the lies of our enemies," he said.

"Ten million, then. Ten million trivia."

"Ten million is too many. Seven million. Say seven million."

"Seven million." Rachel repeated the figure slowly.

"It is true there were so many there are no longer any records. When Comrade Beria, who took over the *En-kay-vay-day* after Comrade Yzhov went mad and abused his *Khozin* and like a mad dog had to be dispatched, proposed an amnesty the view was taken that if they had not been enemies of the people then, they would certainly be enemies of the people now."

"Seven million," I said, "no wonder the Germans cracked the country wide open."

"So," Rachel said, "all the old Party members, yes? That would not matter. That would not have been so bad. But our new Soviet *inteligants,* our engineers and our technicians. And our new Red Army . . ."

"In our country," Mitka said, "we say that when the masters fall out the serf gets his hair pulled."

"I remember," Gregor said, "that Ordjonikidze, the commissar for heavy industry at that time, was imprudent enough to protest. 'You can kill your Party members, that's your business, you can kill the Generals, that's Voroshilov's affair, but I won't have you killing my Engineers!' He was an impulsive man. Two days later he died, strangely enough, like Gorki, of poisoning."

"He did not save his engineers," Rachel said.

"All gondevay," Mitka said. "Everyone gondevay. All staff-officers. All engineers. All doctors. All responsibility of the foreigners. They write false letters against innocent Soviet citizens. They leave evidence everywhere. They make proof everyone is Polish spy. Naturally everyone gondevay. But Russia is big. We make new Party. New Army too!"

"He makes stupid propaganda," Rachel said. "It is something by Seduk in the Eighteenth Party Congress he makes joke about. It is a way of putting the blame."

Mitka contrived to look injured.

"In our country," he said, "we say that if you hunt with the pack it is not necessary to bark, but you must wag your tail."

"Seven million," I said. "No wonder the Boss was willing to make a deal with Hitler. Anything, considering the mess he must have been in."

"In our country," Gregor said, "there is a reason for everything."

"A reason for the *En-kay-vay-day?*" Rachel said.

"Truly, a reason for the *En-kay-vay-day*. If Lenin had not reconstituted the Tcheka our enemies would have forced it upon us. How else could we have combated their organized sabatage? How else could we have tracked down the bourgeois plotters? How else could we have liquidated the Social Revolutionaries, the Mensheviks, the Anarchists, the Right Opposition, and the Left Opposition?"

"How else could you have destroyed the Communist Party?"

"Above all, how could we control and direct our glorious Soviet Workers? Indeed, the *En-kay-vay-day* has become the chief administrative instrument of our Soviet System. There is no Soviet institution, no department of industry or Government, without its recognized Department of Cadres to attend to the matter of personnel, the passports which all workers must carry at all times, and propaganda, and within every Department of Cadres there is the Secret Department to check on political tendencies, to deal with undisciplined expressionism, to combat hysteria and futile opposition."

"To destroy freedom," Rachel said.

"Dear Rachel, freedom is a petit-bourgeois illusion."

"Freedom, gondevay, gondevay," Mitka said sadly.

I could not bear it any longer.

"What is this 'gondevay' thing?" I asked Rachel.

"Ah, that Mitka, he is a fool. It is a saying we had when speaking of our friends. We would say that they had, 'gone the way of all flesh.' We said it in English to conceal the meaning. We were saying it so often that this Mitka learned it. But he cannot say it correctly."

GREGOR SOKUR

In October, 1941, I was sent to the province of Chelyabinsk. It was after my reinstatement. I had asked to be sent to the front, to the place of greatest danger, but instead I was sent to the Urals which was a mark of high confidence. At Chelyabinsk I was alert in the interest of the Fatherland in its struggle with the forces of fascism. It was a difficult period. You will remember the enemy was almost at the gates of Moscow. In the more remote parts of the country strange things were happening. You will have heard of certain terrorist uprisings, of Fascist elements in the trade-unions, of a wave of embezzlements which swept our trading organizations, of bread riots and so on and so on. But in the province of Chelyabinsk there was a village which was pointed out for my attention. The name of the village does not matter. It had been reported that there had been an occurrence at a school for little girls which was causing alarm throughout the district. You will understand the seriousness of it, how it required the hand of a serious officer, when I tell you there were widespread rumors that the occurrence was due to foreign influence in the lives of our Soviet children. I need not remind you of the danger of allowing such rumors to circulate when the true policy has been laid down by our Leader and Teacher. It was necessary to trace this thing to its source, because for every effect there is a cause, and such things have to be traced to their very roots and plucked out. How much disturbance it had caused in the life of this village you will understand when I

tell you that some time afterward Olga Trofimovna told me that she was sure there were gangs of children going about crossing themselves and performing other bourgeois rites and I had to warn her not to spread such stories and there was nothing in our Soviet Constitution which prohibited children from crossing themselves or attending the recognized church. But that was some time later. It is curious that I should have met Olga Trofimovna in that remote village. She is a very old friend, married, nowadays, to a commissar of heavy industry, a person of some importance among the Party families. In Moscow she has, of course, her own beautiful apartment, but at that time she had been evacuated from the capital with her two children to this small village in the Chelyabinsk region. You can imagine how pleased, and surprised, she was to see me there, for it was many years since we had met, and she, naturally, had given me up for dead.

"My dear Gregor," she said, "how glad I am to see you. I suppose you have come about this occurrence at the school for little girls?"

I did not commit myself.

"Ah, Gregor, how pleasant. How nice to meet one of the Old School and not these new ones who are so earnest and humorless."

I felt at once how serious this occurrence must have been in order to have caused Olga Trofimovna such concern and to have led her to express such relief that it was *I* and no other who had come to the village. You must understand that Olga Trofimovna's husband is a man held in considerable esteem in the Highest Quarters, having risen with great speed in the last four years from the position of foreman of a timber mill. And this, naturally, gives Olga Trofimovna a greater responsibility in regard to the people within her influence. We drank tea together and we talked about many things and many people. I saw that she was constantly looking at my new uniform and I was very proud of it, although it was, at that time, without the epaulettes which came later.

I saw that she was admiring my shoulders and my bearing and it was clear to me that she was pleased that I had come to the village and that, indeed, there were very few men there, and her life, so removed from the gaieties of Moscow, must until that moment have been very dull. I noted that she constantly referred to the occurrence at the little girls' school, and although I could not admit that I had any interest in such an event, I agreed finally to let her tell me the story after her own way. This is what she said:

"The occurrence," Olga Trofimovna said, "took place in the classroom of the little girls of the second grade. There was much fuss and talking that morning because the little girls' teacher, Anastasia Roktovna, was late. Poor Anastasia Roktovna! As if it were not enough being late. So Anastasia Roktovna came into the room and all the little girls were at once silent. Anastasia Roktovna looked up and it was at that moment she saw the writing on the blackboard. It was in a large children's hand, in white chalk on the blackboard. Just two words. Two words! *Those* two words!

"Anastasia Roktovna fainted! There was such a commotion that the teacher from the class in the next room came in hurriedly and helped Anastasia Roktovna to her chair. But when she too saw the writing on the blackboard she gave a little scream and ran out of the room. Presently she came back and this time she was with our political instructor, Comrade Kopchick. Comrade Kopchick did not seem to be perturbed by the writing on the blackboard as were the women. You will meet him, Gregor and you will know immediately what kind of a man he is. The teachers left the room and Comrade Kopchick sat at the table. You could see he was making a list of names. He knew the names of all the little girls and the names of their fathers. Some of the little girls began to cry.

"Well, Gregor, it was a very great scandal.

"Comrade Kopchick then went to his office and, one by one, the little girls were called into his presence. It is diffi-

cult to know exactly what happened, for the little girls were always afterward too frightened to speak of it. But no one in our village has any doubt about Comrade Kopchick's motives. You will agree, Gregor, such things have to be examined in every possible aspect. Some of the little girls, for example, have been evacuated from Moscow and there is no knowing to what influences they have been exposed. In these matters, of course, our Soviet cadres leave no stone unturned. But the whole trouble, Gregor, seems to have been that six of the little girls each confessed to having written the words on the blackboard. One can be sure that they have been very closely interrogated by Comrade Kopchick and that each little girl has been asked by whose hand it was done. It is probable that there was some confusion here as a result of certain little girls being suddenly confronted with the evidence of their own complicity. Now, it is certain, this is where Comrade Kopchick is in error. It is only because you are an old friend that I say this to you, Gregor, otherwise I should not dare to meddle in what does not concern me. But it seems to me that a zealous young man like Comrade Kopchick would be much better employed at the front in some useful task urgent to our survival rather than dealing with the difficult psychological problem of the little schoolgirls which would be more suited to an older man of greater experience. For it must be obvious, Gregor my dear, that six little girls could not have written those two words. On the other hand it *is* possible, of course, that the six little girls could have been exposed to the same influence. It is possible to imagine that there may have been a conspiracy, a conclave, even a plot! Children are impressionable and imitative. It is possible that they were merely reflecting the feeling of their parents, is it not?

"One mentions all these possibilities, Gregor, not so much in extenuation of Comrade Kopchick's action, as in explanation of the peculiar atmosphere which has pervaded

our town for some time. You yourself, I am sure my dear Gregor, have not been insensitive to the events of the last six months. I am sure, my dear Gregor, you have not forgotten the communiqué of last June—just a few days before we were attacked by the double-dealing Fascists— which said that reports about German troops concentrating in Poland was a malicious fabrication of the Allies. You, yourself, have watched the fall of Kiev, Odessa, Kharkov, Smolensk. And now Viazma! And Leningrad invested! Of course, for *us* it is easy to understand the great conspiracy of Powers against us and to understand the strategy of the defenders of our country. But in a remote village such as this, my dear Gregor, the atmosphere is more difficult, and villagers may be expected to think that there has been some foolishness somewhere, or by Someone. Besides it is a village of old women. Every man has been called to the defense of the Fatherland, and the village, though it is not very big, has sent all its best. Many of our Soviet cadres have been depleted and it is probable that Comrade Kopchick has acted without the benefit of advice or direction. Such an unprecedented decision on his part would explain a great deal and it is probable that if his incautious researches are, in turn, examined at a higher level, they may be found to be presumptuous and disturbing to the morale of the community at a moment of utmost gravity.

"But, my dear Gregor, who shall say that Comrade Kopchick is wrong?

"There is this teacher Anastasia Roktovna. Might not Comrade Kopchick have considered the possibility of the germ spreading from this source? How can one such as myself guess what is known, or not known, about Anastasia Roktovna. She is a woman with very small hands and feet and a very sensitive face and it is not impossible that she is of the former people. Of course, we in our village know that Anastasia Roktovna is really one of the heroes of the Soviet Republics. For years before the Revolution she

taught in village schools far from the cities, combating prejudice, suffering neglect and persecution, in order to bring learning to far places where it was not welcome. But it is true that in those years there were many perverse tendencies to which Anastasia Roktovna may have been exposed. And the very fact that she is old enough to remember those times, before the dawn of this happy life for which we have to be thankful, and this alone, remembering also that she is an intellectual, must place her under suspicion.

"My dear Gregor, I see you are amused. It is true that at this distance from Moscow we are without culture. You see we have nothing else to talk about here except local gossip."

If Olga Trofimovna chose to talk of this thing with insistence it was understandable. For I soon discovered that her own daughter Katya was one of those six little girls who confessed to Comrade Kopchick. Now Olga Trofimovna, as I think I mentioned, is the wife of a commissar, and therefore a person of some importance among the Party families, although Katya is a daughter by a former marriage. I mention this because I do not think Comrade Kopchick properly understood his responsibilities.

"It is all so silly," Olga said to me. "It is clear how it happened. You have only to read their lesson books. It is almost the first word they learn to read. It is in every lesson.

I interrupted.

"I agree about the first word," I said. "Naturally it is the name most commonly written and publicly spoken in our country. But I do not agree about the second word. The word *fool* does not appear anywhere in our schoolbooks."

"But, my dear Gregor," Olga said, "it is a word of common usage. And you must have observed how profane our language has become in recent years. And little girls, our little Soviet girls who are so observant and bright, with nothing better to do in the absence of their fathers and their older brothers, might be forgiven for being tempo-

rarily wrong. Moreover, Gregor, this is a period of benevolence, as you have reason to know."

Olga Trofimovna is a very clever woman.

It is true, too, that her Katya, as I had opportunity to observe in the ensuing months, is beyond her years in mental capacity and is an exceptional child. This has always led me to think that it was, indeed, Katya, and not any of the other five children, who was responsible for the writing on the blackboard.

One day when we were alone together, long after Comrade Kopchick's departure, I taxed Olga with this. I was curious to know how the little girls had been received by Comrade Kopchick. Olga said that Katya never spoke of it now and that the child was not to be reminded of it. But that evening, when she had come home to her mother after Kopchick's interrogation, Katya had sat very still and had looked as though she had a fever. Then Olga had asked her to say what had happened, but Katya had frowned and pouted like a bad Moscow child. Olga, of course, knew the general story, but none, not even she, dared repeat the words written on the blackboard. It seemed that Katya also could not bring herself to repeat them.

"My dear Olga," I said, "how did you persuade Katya to tell you what was written on the blackboard?"

"I gave her a slip of paper and a pencil and I told her to write it down. I have it here."

Olga drew from her bosom a small slip of paper and showed it to me. There it was in the same childlike hand. Two words.

"My dear Olga," I said, "why do *you* keep this document?"

She is a clever woman. She said nothing. But she gave me the paper and now I keep it here, always, in my pocket where some day it will be found.

It was long after the curfew hour. I had my special curfew-card which would get me past the *militsia,* but it was too late for the Russians to go abroad. It was their custom to stay on until the curfew was raised at five o'clock in the morning and then to go home and to sleep until daylight.

Thus they would go on talking for hours.

Mitka poured the last of the vodka into the glasses. With a disarming grin he turned to me and toasted me in English.

"Prove you're not a camel," he said.

"So, we are back to the Animal's Fair," I said.

"It is my own contribution to the language," Mitka said solemnly. He repeated the phrase, "Prove you're not a camel, it is a good saying, is it not?"

"Monumental. And all your own work."

"It was at Minsk," Mitka said. "I was hurrying across the square with my bag in my hand when a friend stopped me.

" 'Say, what's the hurry? Where are you going?' he said.

" 'Don't stop me,' I said. 'I am leaving town.'

" 'Leaving town?' he said. 'Say, what's the matter with you?'

" 'Haven't you heard?' I said.

" 'Heard what?' he said.

" 'About the new ukase,' I said. 'Haven't you heard about the new ukase?'

" 'What ukase?' he said. 'Every day there is a new ukase.'

" 'This one,' I said, 'says that from tomorrow morning all camels in this region must be castrated.'

" 'So,' my friend said, 'all camels must be castrated.'

" 'Yes,' I said.

" 'What's that to you or me?' he said.

" 'Prove you're not a camel,' I said."

I had heard it before somewhere, but it was amusing the way he told it. Mitka's humor did not change the tenseness which had come into the little room.

I rose and offered the company cigarettes. I held out my pack to Gregor. He took the cigarette, acknowledging it with a slow uplifting of his widely spaced eyes, the little blue eyes beneath the stiff fair eyelashes, eyes like an old boar. In his eyes was the understanding of the reason behind my gesture. I saw the sturdy body, short thick arms, wide flat face and shaven skull. I saw the slow deliberation which the Northern peoples have.

Rachel, too, understood my gesture.

"You do not know well the Lett, eh?" she said, smiling

"No," I said.

"None were so firm in the Revolution, and in the Civil War they were the best fighters. In 1937 and 1938 they were firm too. They had to kill them all, even all those who made up the Kremlin Guard, and in the Party and among themselves, all of them. You cannot move a Lett with argument because he has no sophistry and is of one mind, nor with torture because he has so much physique, nor with any kind of fear because it is not in him."

As though he had understood, Gregor spoke:

"I am the only man alive today who has been with the Tcheka, the OGPU and N.K.V.D.," he said. "I have witnessed everything."

He called it by its proper name *Narkomvnudel* instead of the colloquial *En-kay-vay-day.*

"How many did you send away, Gregor?" Mitka asked with a wink at me.

"None that were not the enemies of the people."

"They all say that."

"It is true. I saved the lives of thousands. Thousands are alive today because of me. I saved the life of General Yakosovsky and the aircraft designer Tupelov. The medals and orders which decorate their chests should be mine."

"It is so," Rachel said. "It was Gregor who delayed Ivan's arrest."

She spoke in Russian to Gregor. "How is it you were not buried with the other Witnesses," she said.

"I was sent on a mission to several regions. I was traveling. When I came back to Moscow I prepared myself. I waited for a long time. Then I became tired of waiting and I went to them and I said, 'Here I am,' but they said, 'Maybe we aren't going to take you after all.' The period of benevolence had already begun."

"The period of benevolence," I said, translating.

"You understand?" Lizavetta said.

"Yes," I said, "I can follow him."

I could follow him, but the difficulty of the language made it impossible for me to judge the depth of the irony.

"It was logical to shoot me in 1938," Gregor said. "It was not logical to shoot me in 1939 or in 1940. In 1941 it would have been stupid to shoot me."

"It was a time of great urgency," Rachel said.

"In 1941 I offered myself to them and I was accepted," Gregor said.

"That was not logical," said Rachel.

"It was a decision of one without experience. When the urgency passed I knew my position would be reviewed by one with experience, by the One-with-the-Greatest-Experience, and then the decision would be made. Two days ago I was asked to return my uniform. It was stated that I had been illegally reinstated."

"And now he is waiting," Rachel said in English. "With Gregor it is only sleep. He cannot sleep, so he comes here, and he listens, and talks a little. He cannot sleep because he is waiting."

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"But why does he wait? I still don't understand this business of waiting," I said.

"You do not understand," Rachel said. "There is nothing to do. His case has been in review and the decision has been made. Gregor is one of the Witnesses and that is rare. He is probably the only living Witness, except those who have become images, for in the last phase all were taken, even the dearly beloved pupil of our leader and teacher, Comrade Yzhov. The loss of innocence, even when cradled in the crudest form, is the unforgivable perishable thing."

"I don't fully understand about the innocence," I said.

"You must see it everywhere about you," Rachel said. You must see it every day in the youth and the children and among others much older whom, you may have noticed, are pricked with fear when you, by your speech or merely by your presence, threaten to rob them of their innocence. But innocence is not the loss of belief, for one can still believe, as myself, yet lack innocence. Nor is it disloyalty, for one can be loyal, as Gregor is loyal, and lack innocence. It is more like a loss of faith, like a priest's sudden, inexplicable failure to have faith in God, and that may come about, not by persuasion or any of the means of logic, but simply by having seen too much of God's work and God's ways."

"Innocence is often strength," I said.

"But loss of innocence does not mean weakness," Rachel said. "In our country the loss of innocence can bring great violence, profound bitterness and strange reversals. It can provoke action. All this is understood."

Rachel drew a breath. "Ah, my poor country. Seven million!" She repeated the number in Russian.

Her voice was heard by Gregor.

"You are influenced by figures," he said. "You forget the capacity of our country. This great country which can produce a new staff cadre in two years, and a new intelligentsia out of the peasantry in less time. If you believe in figures

consider the eight million killed in the Civil War, the seven million who perished in the famines, the five million who died in the collectivizations. And in this war, how many do you think will be dead by the time we enter Berlin? Remember that five Soviet armies were surrounded west of Mojaisk and in the campaigns of Voronesh and Novorossiisk and the Don we have lost another million. Do not forget that in Leningrad they were eating each other last winter while in the provinces of Kazakstan and Biro-Bijan whole populations were starving. Think of the devastations of the Fascists in the Ukraine. Byelo-Russia and the Donbas, the millions driven off for slave labor, other millions dying unattended of disease. How many will have died by the time we enter Berlin? Thirty million is not too high a figure if you believe in figures."

And now Gregor's voice became thick.

"Against the casualties of unavoidable circumstances of history what are the few mistakes made by ourselves in our efforts to avoid succumbing to those circumstances?"

The Lett paused.

"What is one life beside all those? One mistake?"

"It depends which life," Rachel said.

IVAN ROMANTSIEV

He was wearing an old Red Army greatcoat and a uniform which had been washed many times and mended. The overcoat and the uniform were those of a senior officer but the insignia of rank had been removed. The tunic collar bore

the markings of the four bars of a full commander, reckoning by the old style, and on the left breast there were patches of unbleached cloth where orders had rested and here a tear in the cloth had been sewed. He wore a peaked cap at a jaunty angle which made him seem younger than his white hair, his limp, and his scarred and blunted face denoted. He carried himself lightly and his eyes were alert and sometimes lit with sardonic humor. He carried a standard Russian infantryman's rifle, handling it with the easy habit of an old soldier, and around his body there was wrapped a belt of machine-gun cartridges. There was a pistol resting inside his tunic front and two stick grenades were thrust down his boot tops.

There were sixteen of them and he was their acknowledged leader, although he had no such military rank and would probably have been shot for it if circumstances had been different. But there was no political officer with them and the only regular officer was a junior lieutenant called Kostia-Barov who was a simple easygoing young man. They were all that was left of the Sixth People's Guards Division which had met the leisurely thrust of Von Boch's Fifth Armored Corps on the Smolensk road. The Fascists had killed all but a few of the division and dispersed the others in an action which had lasted one day. The Sixth People's Guards Division, comprising volunteers raised by appeal in Moscow in August and November, 1941, and sent into the line at Yelna, Borovsk and at this place, had delayed Von Boch not more than a week and now the Fascists were converging on Moscow down the main highways from Rzhev, Kaluga and Viazma. The sixteen men who were the remnant of the Sixth People's Guards Division were resting in a deserted factory building not far from the little town of Istra. They had come down the main highway from Volokolampsk and they had seen no sign of a command post or of any rearguard troops. They were conscious that their force, the last of the People's Guards Divisions, thrown

together in September, had been the actual rearguard of the regular army which had attempted to hold up Von Boch at Smolensk. What had surprised them was the appearance of the enemy in advance of any evidence of the dissolution of the regular army: there were no withdrawing columns, no ambulances, no stragglers, no refugees or fleeing peasants coming eastward: the regular army had been swiftly cut off and surrounded and was now swallowed up in the deep rear of the Fascist avalanche. This had left the Sixth People's Guards Division alone, without artillery or heavy weapons, without communications or support of any kind, directly in the path of the Fascists who had destroyed them leisurely and with insolence. The strange silence and the emptiness of the landscape which had been the uncommon characteristic of the battle they had fought two days previously prevailed now near Istra; it was quiet, there was no noise of artillery or of bombing and the only sound they heard was at night when formations of aircraft flew over them in the direction of Moscow. The sixteen men had proceeded eastward along the well-made road, taking cover at the sound or sight of any activity, and stopping all who approached them. In this way they had overtaken several peasants, one man who said he was a courier from Smolensk and another who was in uniform of the Red Air Force and who said his airplane had been shot down. The one who said he was a courier was an excited man who proclaimed a great disaster: the five Soviet armies west of Viazma had been surrounded and captured with all their equipment and men were being herded together on the steppe like cattle and driven westward into Poland. In the Ukraine, he said, the Fascists were proclaiming an independent republic and in many villages peasants had met the invaders with bread and salt. Several among the sixteen were of a mind to shoot this courier except that what the Air Force pilot said confirmed the excited one's statements. The Red Air Force had lost twelve hundred airplanes in the first hour of the Fascist

assault, he said, and the Fascists had bombed every secret airdrome between Poland and Moscow. They had also bombed and burned every granary and food store in every city. The pilot said he had seen great columns of smoke rising from Kiev, Kharkov, Smolensk, Kursk, Tula, Orel, Bryansk, Kaluga and Rzhev.

As a consequence of such rumors the sixteen survivors of the Sixth People's Guards Division believed that the Fascists would enter Moscow in a few days. They did not know that the Fascist radio was already broadcasting this as a fact. They only knew that the enemy did not seem to be in haste. Although there were two panzer divisions and six full infantry divisions in Von Boch's corps they were deploying in an easy fashion. Ahead of the corps, on the three roads to Moscow, there was a light reconnaissance screen composed of motorcyclists and some light tanks captured from the French. The reconnaissance units were supported by Stuka dive-bombers. Ivan Romantsiev believed that the Fascists planned to enter Moscow on a certain date and with their usual thoroughness were adhering strictly to plan. He said it would be December 6 or December 7. Kostia Barov said it was certain to be December 7 because that would be exactly a month since the last great parade in Red Square. He said December 7, 1941, would certainly be an historical date because Hitler would fly to Moscow and would stand on Lenin's tomb and review the panzer divisions marching past, just as he had visited the Unknown Soldier's tomb at the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. Hitler was fond of standing on tombs, Kostia said. Another man said the Fascists were polishing their boots and medals for the parade and this was the reason they were not pressing forward. Among the sixteen, Ivan and Kostia were the only men in uniform. The others wore portions of military clothing, some had old Red Army forage caps, greatcoats or boots, others had nothing but greasy working clothes and black cloth caps which they had worn at their jobs in the Moscow factories.

They were all volunteers and they had been marched out of Moscow without arms or ammunition or uniforms. At a place along the road a truck had caught up with them and they had been supplied with some weapons. The weapons were very old rifles stamped with pre-Revolution dates. The rifling in the barrels was often worn and rusted. But the men were proud of their weapons and dressed and petted them. The men of the Sixth People's Guards Division were almost all workers who were too old for service in the Red Army or who had been rejected for other reasons. They had been supplied with regular army officers. The commander of the Division was a thick-necked peasant from Tambov who had fought in the Civil War and had retained the rank of captain until 1937 when, to his dismay, he had been ordered to undertake a commander's course at the Frunze Academy. He was not certain of his new command which was so variously assorted. The men in the ranks of the Division had quickly realized this and it was not long before someone was heard to say: "Class of '37," and this raised a number of sardonic grins, brought also a new sense of comradeship to the men of the Division. They were a lean, grim, scarred, grey-headed lot and they believed they had their own private reasons for being there. At first, Ivan's uniform had made them a little shy of him and he had been stealthily regarded by many who noted the signs of the missing insignia with significant nods. As his section had straggled out along the Smolensk road Ivan had begun to sing. He was full of happiness to be marching again, once more to be a soldier. Without design he had begun the song of the Partisans, a song of the Civil War. Presently the refrain was taken up by a high tenor voice of beautiful quality and then by other voices, rusting voices, but voices which knew the song. In a short time every man in the section was singing and they were marching in step and in close regular order and with pride in doing so. Afterward they crowded around Ivan and asked him many questions:

they asked him about the Civil War, his part in the Revolution, mentioning simply their own exploits, where they had been and, sometimes with humor, recalling a half-forgotten incident. Ivan and these older ones, when the Division was resting, or at night, quietly showed the others, factory workers, former functionaries, how to handle their weapons, how to throw grenades of which they had a few, how to set explosive charges, how to dig holes in which to take cover, how to sleep in snow, and all the lore of soldiering since there were ever armies. It was with excitement and feelings of joy that the old broken men studied the art of war. The officers, watching them, said nothing, kept aloof, except this one Kostia who was a humorous fellow without political sense. One subject which none of the men talked about was what they had done in recent years. It was obvious that a few had been soldiers, many were intellectuals, school teachers, factory workers, one was a physician, another an engineer, clearly some had been Party officials. Nor were any questions asked or any words said about Party matters. That was how it had been until that day early in December when they had encountered the enemy. Ivan knowing them by this time, thought them capable soldiers. Few units of the Red Army, he thought, could have showed such a high level of individual intelligence, and few, he knew, would exceed them in bravery. If only we had artillery, he said, or machine guns. What they had needed in actual fact, it later proved, were anti-tank guns and mortars; but it is doubtful if any weapons would have saved them. Fascist observation planes had flown low over them, the pilots grinning at the long straggling line of un-uniformed men who, forgetful of taking cover, stared back at the observers, a few firing excitedly into the air. They had not reached the artillery positions of the army whose support they were to have been when the Fascists appeared. A few hours after the observation planes had spotted them enemy reconnaissance patrols made contact with their flanks and had withdrawn without

They spent the night in a wood and in the morning Ivan crawled forward to a small eminence which he calculated overlooked a portion of the battlefield. What he saw convinced him the battle was indeed over. In a bare field lightly covered with snow a hundred men of the Division, most of them wounded, many supporting their more injured comrades, were drawn up in a line with their backs to a small wood. Suddenly the line began to waver and crumble and then Ivan heard the sound of a sub-machine gun; at the same time he saw the weapon in the hands of the Fascist soldier spitting an even red flame as it pumped bullets into the mass of survivors of the Sixth People's Guards. Ivan watched the battlefield for some time but saw no movement except that of the Fascists who brought a few light vehicles across the stream. He lay with his detail in the wood during the day and at night they withdrew, moving quickly eastward. In the morning they joined the detail led by Lieutenant Kostia Barov and four men who had escaped from the battle came up with them. One of these men told them how the battle had gone. The Division had dug in after the approved manner. As with all the rivers and streams of Russia, the west bank was higher than the eastern bank. This man had seen enemy officers walking along the high western bank looking down at them, peering through field glasses, and pointing out their positions. Some men in the Division had fired at these enemy officers, but their shots had gone wide and all that they had heard was the laughter of the enemy officers, loud and contemptuous across the stream and field, satisfied at not having drawn anything more substantial than rifle fire. The enemy had cleared a section of the eastern bank in full view of the Division by sending over a barrage of mortar fire. They had then sent several men across on pontoons and had begun to build a bridge. It was some time before the Division realized what the enemy was doing. The officers of the Division had then attempted to bring the rifle fire of their men to bear on

closing in action. The commander of the Sixth People's Guards Division hurriedly put his men into position along the bank of a stream. It was a classical preparation for battle and might have served them well had they been supported by artillery, had they had support of any kind, or weapons of any range or caliber larger than old army rifles. The situation was something the commander had recently learned in class and not something he remembered from the Civil War campaigns. The commander then selected two details, one under Lieutenant Kostia Barov to make contact with Red Army forces on the southern flank, and one under Ivan Romantsiev to make contact with the forces in advance of them and whose support they were supposed to have been and which at this moment should have been executing an orderly withdrawal. What happened to the Sixth People's Guards Division happened while these details were absent and it was their absence which largely accounted for their survival. Ivan's detail failed to make any contact with the rearward elements of the army ahead of them. Nor did they cross any communications leading up to that army, nor any vehicles returning from it; instead they were forced to take cover in the woods most of the day and at night they barely avoided blundering into enemy encampments or clashing with enemy patrols. Although they were able to go forward some thirty kilometers their progress was more and more retarded by enemy outposts and lines of communication. It was apparent that the enemy was present in great strength. On two occasions Ivan saw scores of tanks drawn up under birch thickets or run into barns or peasant huts. On the afternoon of the next day they sighted a great column of smoke to the west. No Russian soldier was to be seen. Ivan turned back. That night as they approached the position taken up by their Division they heard the sound of machine-gun and mortar fire. Ivan then took his men in a wide detour to the south approaching the flank of the Division. A whole day had passed and the firing had ceased.

the enemy at work on the bridge, but the fire had been desultory and inaccurate. A detail which had been ordered to advance on the bridge and to throw hand grenades at the bridge-builders had been destroyed by a burst of sharp concentrated fire from enemy machine guns. A second detail was destroyed in exactly the same way. A third detail flung one grenade which fell short before it also was destroyed. Three men of the Division swam under water downstream reaching the pontoons and thrusting knives into the rubber floats. One man scrambled on to the half-built bridge and with a yell that was heard by all the men of the Division plunged his knife into one of the Fascists. The narrator said he saw the white naked body gleaming and then there were several sharp pistol shots and the naked man fell into the ice-crusted water. His body, caught for a moment in the ice, was dislodged by a burst of fire which broke the surface of the stream like heavy hail. They had then floated logs down the stream, but these had been caught by a wire boom which had been flung across the stream for this purpose. While this was being done, according to the classical plan of defense, the Fascists had built the bridge. An enemy detail then crossed the bridge followed by a light tank. The only opposition was the uncontrolled and sporadic rifle fire of the men entrenched on the eastern bank. Nevertheless as the light tank hit the western bank a Russian in a black cap and overalls who had remained hidden in a hole in the bank of the stream, all that time under the noses of the bridge-builders, suddenly rose up and, walking a few steps flung a hand grenade at the tracks of the light tank, and then began shooting at the enemy at such close range that they were momentarily confused and failed to kill him with their automatic weapons until he had wounded several of their number. The light tank, however, had suffered some damage and now lay in a crippled state, half on the bridge and half on the bank. This obstinacy of the Russian rabble caused the enemy to halt the bridge-building operation for

some time. They threw over a light barrage of mortar bombs which began to make the Russian positions untenable. At that moment a man in a Red Army uniform stood up and began walking toward the enemy bridgehead. The narrator told Ivan it was the commander of the Division. Apparently impatient of the classical warfare and angered beyond endurance by the insolence of the enemy he had fallen back on old Civil War tactics. For a few minutes he was watched by the other men lying close to the ground. Then another man rose up and then another and another until more than a company of men were on their feet and walking deliberately through the mortar fire toward the bridge. As though to an order the mortars ceased firing and then the number of advancing Russians increased. They began to lope forward and soon they were running and some among them, who had the breath, were shouting the long-drawn "Oorah" of the Russian cavalry. The enemy withheld their fire, their machine gunners adjusted their sights, and then when the Russians were bunched together approaching the bridgehead they cut them down with a sharp concentration of fire, so that they began to fall like a covey of quail to the guns of an army of sportsmen, some falling heavily, others stumbling, then rising and fluttering a few steps and falling again. One man reached the stream and was shot leaping into its waters. Then, said the man telling the story, then the thing of which they had all been afraid, had happened. Fascist tanks followed by infantry armed with automatic weapons appeared on their flanks and began closing in on them liquidating each Russian, one after another. No Russian had surrendered and only a few, he among them, had escaped.

Ivan counted sixteen of them. There may have been others but they were lost to him. None of the sixteen questioned his right to count them under his command, none questioned the assumption that they were still the Sixth People's Guards Division, or that they were still committed

to fighting a delaying action against the advancing Fascists. As a small group, Ivan said, they could harass the enemy forces, prey on his lines of communication, ambush his patrols and reconnaissance parties. But, before that they would try to establish contact with other groups, with Moscow, if possible; if the Fascists entered Moscow then to carry the war of shooting and assassination into the streets of the city. Thus, they had marched rapidly toward Moscow, keeping some distance in advance of the enemy forces, which, certain of easy victory, were moving without haste. On the second day of their march they were only thirty kilometers from Moscow and they were now sure that they were the only Russian troops between the enemy and their city. There was no sound of fighting to be heard. Birch and fir trees were festooned with snow and the ground was lightly covered so that the trace of the smallest animal could be observed. There was no sign of wheeled traffic on the road. Snow, thawing at midday, and rain had turned the fields into quagmires. At one village those peasants who had not already evacuated had locked themselves inside their huts and would not open their doors. But the men had found some bread and a few bottles of vodka in an abandoned army wagon and now, camped in this disused factory for the night, with a fire burning, they ate, or they lay sleeping of exhaustion, some stirring about seeking wood, others standing guard. Some sat with their backs to the wall, their feet toward the fire, sitting there easily taking stock of each other, of the situation they were in. One of the things which happened after the battle was that each of the survivors had suddenly lost the constraint of many years and now spoke freely. At first it was by allusion and by cryptic reference that each conveyed to the others that at one time he had been denounced as an enemy of the people. The irony of their situation provoked disclosures. Then, from being the cause of much sardonic amusement, it became a joke to com-

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pare notes, to speak of certain periods, to identify jails and jailers, to talk esoterically of methods and effects, of confessions. All this developed suddenly, spontaneously, without Ivan's connivance, his head being full of plans, his senses alert to danger, his whole being poised for action, so that the subject of the amusement around him dawned belatedly upon him.

"For myself," he heard one man say, "I am an individual Anarchist."

Ivan looked quickly at this man, not understanding the irony, struck only by the words. Another man laughed.

"I had confessed," the first man went on. "Yes, I had confessed to the sabotage of the Five-Year Plan, to the betrayal of the Red Army's mobilization plans, to the wrecking of this industry and that enterprise, and when my interrogator, who had suggested these items, said that to have committed such crimes I must have had confederates I said, no, I was an individual Anarchist."

There was a grunt of amusement from several men.

Another man said: "I am a singer. I was the chief tenor in the Red Army chorus which visited Paris. I was accused of having attempted to blow up the Eiffel Tower."

Another said: "I was arrested as a spy. My wife was arrested and imprisoned for lack of vigilance in harboring a spy in the family. After six months I was released. My wife is still in prison.

Other stories were exchanged. Some told their stories eagerly and it was evident that this was the first time they had ever dared to mention their experiences.

A short dark little man said: "It was like that with me. I was asked who was my confederate. I said: 'Julius Caesar.' Next day the interrogator said: 'What's this about Julius Caesar. We've checked up on him. He's another Counter-revolutionary Fascist.'"

A slight, balding man with eyeglasses said: "I was given for my thesis the subject of contemporary French literature

How was I to know that in the course of the year the name of the Counter-Revolutionary author Gide was no longer mentionable.

A young man with a white face who said he had once been a factory director spoke:

"They came to my factory in 1937," he said, "and they said they wanted a certain man because he was a spy. Then they came again and took others until a score of my best engineers had been taken. Then one day I said to my wife: 'I cannot understand it any more. It is terrible.' And my wife who is a Party member of later standing said: 'I do not believe they are spies.' Then suddenly I saw that it was easier to believe they had been arrested for anything except that they were spies. Then one day at a Party meeting on the motion of the Party secretary I was expelled for showing lack of vigilance at my factory."

"We know the rest," a voice cried.

"What did you confess, Comrade?"

Ivan looked about him. There were a dozen men in the room. He was suddenly conscious of these men as individuals with lives paralleling his own; he was no longer alone with his agony; there were others in the same mind. They were not peasants like his old Partisan Comrades; they were not bureaucrats like those whom he had worked with in the intervening years; nor were they the silent, disciplined men of recent years whom none talked to and who talked with none. They were a new kind of Russia, men of experience, adults older than the infantilism of patriotic gestures, sycophancy, and ideological taboos, men who could talk grimly but freely without the restraint of being overheard, men whose fear has been suddenly resolved in battle. He looked at them now as they munched hunks of black bread, taking short gulps of grey peasant vodka, and he found them wholly felicitous comrades. Their faces, partly illuminated by the light from the fire, were Russian faces; though unshaven, unwashed, with the smoke and

grime of war on them, they were Russian faces; the spectacled intellectual with the oversensitive mouth, the hollow-cheeked flint-eyed man in the leather cap, the thin one with the lines of sardonic humor curling around his eyes, the high cheekbones, the hard eyes, taut mouths, on all their faces the marks and scars of hard usage. Suddenly Ivan Romantsiev found the Russia he had always wanted: the enlightened, hard-headed, sardonic, cynical Russia, as free and as fearless in thought as in action.

"I cannot understand," the young factory director said, "why so many confessed to crimes they never committed?"

The inquiry raised an undertone of laughter.

"Pain," someone said.

"Men will confess their mothers," another said.

"In 1917," Ivan said, "many were tortured, but few spoke."

"And in 1937 the same men confessed. It seems that men have integrity for only a short time in their lives."

"The Bozom bottle!" one said and there was more laughter.

But this was the question which had revolved in Ivan's mind after his release from the Lubianka prison, sitting in the gentle sun, with the noise of children playing near by and the sound of the city beyond, his son standing beside him, and Rachel not far away, this was the question he had asked himself and it had echoed in his mind without an answer.

"Those Old Bolsheviks had faith," a man said. "At heart they were Christians."

"You are right," said the man whose wife had been arrested, "they believed in lying and torturing and martyrdom and suffering too."

"In a great cause," Ivan said.

"It is always a great cause. Who is to judge what is a great cause?"

"The people," Ivan said.

"Great causes come and go, but methods remain."

"The Revolution brought its own code. It was a higher code than that of the Christians," the 'Individual Anarchist' said.

"There is no God, no morality, there is only the State."

"The State can be a religion. Worship the State!"

"The State is withering away."

In the dim light it was hard to identify voice with speaker. But they came to recognize each voice by its timbre. The simplest statements were those of the bitterest men as though they had not yet discovered that there were words enough to express their feeling.

"I shall give you the recipe for a Great State," a voice said. It was the slight, balding man with the eyeglasses who had omitted to check on the admissibility of Gide. His voice was professorial, but the high querulousness was now suddenly firmed with intellectual anger, so that the men were amused and listened.

"You put a label on those who are in opposition to you. Then you exhort men that it is right and just to kill those so labeled, you license men to kill, telling them they are your accomplices in the conspiracy to achieve liberty. And in all this there is pleasure for them, since you, the State, have absolved them from all blame or punishment and they may thus exercise their romantic savagery without any sense of guilt. All this you make with propaganda at a time when the foundations of society are infirm. Later you are able to change the labels about, placing them like targets on others of whom you would be rid, finally placing them on the men themselves who by that time are so without judgment, or self-knowledge, that they blindly shoot themselves."

"Ah, you are too complex," a voice said.

"That is fascism," another said.

"What is the difference between German fascism and Russian communism?" This was the short dark little man who had confessed Julius Caesar as an accomplice.

"There is no difference."

"There is much difference!"

"Under fascism there is no hope. Under communism there is hope that the Socialist foundation laid by Lenin will be reasserted." This was the singer who had attempted to demolish the Eiffel Tower.

"Even now?"

"If we win the war our Regime will be secure," the short dark little man said. "But with German fascism defeated, and the Fascist regime smashed beyond repair, the German people will have the opportunity to rebuild."

"What will they build?"

"A great State."

"I will give you a formula for a great State." It was the Professor again. Some of the men laughed. "First you seize power and that is the most difficult part. After that you maintain an efficient and ruthless police system and divide your people into groups, each group having privileges above the other so that you may belong to the group that is half starved but there is still a group below you which is really starving, No man likes to lose his privileges, however slight they be. Thus you begin a class system in which privilege is the reward of loyalty."

The men were stirring at these exchanges. Eyes were shining with a kind of laughter, a self-mockery, self-hurting, and each man would have liked to better his comrade's sophistry. Only the young man who said he had been a factory director maintained a serious air.

"Why is it," the young factory director said, "that our Russian people who resisted oppression for centuries, expressed in numberless revolts, today accept oppression without a dissentient voice among them?"

"He speaks of the Opposition," a man said.

"He speaks of the Trotskyist scum," another said.

"He speaks of the dead."

"No. I do not speak of parties. I speak of the people. I speak of the living," the young factory director insisted.

"He speaks of science. It is science that has concentrated power."

"What can the proletariat do against psychology which anticipates its mood and reaction, against the methods of facsimile which divert and disarm it, against transportation which keeps it ever moving?" This was the man whose wife had been arrested.

"It is not science, Comrade. It is man's insatiable appetite for power. One man's appetite."

"History creates its own leaders: leaders do not make history."

"History is invention."

"The only reality is power."

"With power one can make history as he likes."

"He carves history like a sculptor using death for a chisel."

"Death is the shape of life! You destroy men and you destroy ideas."

"Then there would be no end to the killing, for an idea is not the discovery or possession of one man or several men. Ideas possess men."

Now the statements crowded quickly upon one another, as others became articulate. It was clear that for some of the men these brief utterances had the power and splendor of revelation.

"Power is crime," one of the new voices said.

"To avoid the acceptance of power is a crime," said another.

"That is what I wish to understand," the young man who had been a factory director said, speaking as though there were all time ahead of him in which to pursue the inquiry. "There must be a certain moment in the seizing of power when power is not yet in the hands of the power-lusting. No man is driven into power, nor is the acquisition of power inevitable. There is a moment when power is bequeathed to him either by abstention of those with more rightful title or by abnega-

tion, and this is more true of revolutionaries who understand power than of any other people. I speak of December 1924 when I was a child."

"It was a man's vanity which cost us the Revolution," said a new voice in the shadows of the room. "The next-Greatest felt himself to be so great that he remained aloof waiting for the people to hand him the Laurel, instead of seizing it, and when the less-Great stole it he was already condemned. And all that has been said or written since is in extenuation of this guilt, on the one hand the guilt of vanity, and on the other hand the guilt of theft."

"Not vanity," Ivan said, "but innocence."

"It is true," the singer said, "in those days we behaved as though the Party was above the level of human fallibility."

"Vanity! Innocence! These are the masks we use to disguise from ourselves the foreknowledge of failure." The voice in the shadows was the voice of one accustomed to authority and the equipment of learning. Ivan wondered who it could be.

"A man senses when his mission is ended."

"A man may know when a period has ended."

"Perhaps his heart failed him," Ivan said.

"It would have made any heart fail," said the one who had confessed to individual anarchy. "That vision, in 1924, of the future of Russia without Lenin which he, with the information at his hand, and his imagination, must have foreseen."

"And so, and so," cried another excitedly, "deliberately avoiding the accession to power, preferring instead to carry what he had of glory and achievement into exile."

"Leaving behind," said the voice in the shadows, "for execution by the less-Great—by those he know to be less competent—a *plan* for collectivization, a *theory* of industrialization, and a *lesson* in militarization."

"The precedent of Brest-Litovsk."

"Yes, and the Anatomy of Terror."

"With moral justifications of impeccable fluency."

The short dark little man spoke. "Who amongst us would

not have made that unconscious choice: to have gone on and failed in what was destined to fail, or to have become the custodian of a Theory, even though it led to exile and death?"

The sharp excited talk seemed for a moment to have run its course. The fire spluttered and the wavering light cast small moving shadows into the faces of the men who were not moving, whose stony immobility of feature hid the fury of their thoughts.

"Yet," said one man, "the news that it had been necessary to murder him, even so late as 1940 when the power was already consolidated, proves that he was feared, that even then he might have participated."

"Who believes that after so long a time, after the propaganda and the disillusionment, after the vicissitudes a Theory would find followers?"

"His name is forgotten."

"They no longer use it even as a term of obloquy."

"No; that murder was for history. For the record. To end the intolerable fluency."

"The moment of decision was in our time. It was in December 1924."

"But these are bookish conjectures," Ivan said. "It is foolish to think that he had any more choice than we had. Like us he was trapped by his ideals, by the ecstasy of Revolutionary achievement, by the Vision."

There was a silence for a few minutes. But the talk was not yet ended.

"But that moment in December 1924 was the moment of reality." It was the young factory director insisting on his earlier theme. "It was the moment when the ideal objectives which energize revolution were replaced by the limited objectives of the people."

"What did we care for the world revolution."

"We were always chauvinists."

"In 1917 we cried 'Peace' when peace was what the people

wanted and we cried 'Peace and Land' when they wanted land."

"We were the only party which spoke Russian."

"Vladimir Ilyich always said, 'My Russians. . . .'"

"We were the only party without foreign alliances."

"In 1921 we were the only true nationalists."

"We were the only party whom the people could trust."

"The current nationalism is no different from that of 1921."

"But it is done with less taste."

"I will give you a formula for world power." It was the Professor talking. All the men laughed at the solemn tone of the high-pitched academic voice. "First, in the name of Liberty and Equality, you call on all the opposition parties to join you in overthrowing the oppressive authority. Then when you have acceded to authority yourself you destroy all those who aided you. But your State is surrounded by smaller States so, in the name of Liberty and Equality, you call on them to join you in a grand federation of States, agreeing to recognize their variant systems. Then when they have joined your State you send envoys and secret police to their States and you soon displace their systems with your own. But your federation of small States is surrounded by large more powerful States, so in the name of Liberty and Equality, you appeal to the people of those States to join you in a world revolution and so you achieve a division of the people within those States and you alone are undivided and powerful."

The men had become tired of the game. None spoke for a while. Then someone said:

"Since we are all Fascists here, why are we fighting the Fascists?"

Another said: "Why did we all leap at the opportunity of volunteering in a People's Army?"

"For myself." Ivan said, "I am fighting to kill Fascists. If it is not possible for me to kill Russian Fascists then I shall kill German Fascists."

There were grunts of assent.

The talk had been exciting for men who had not talked freely for many years. The words had come unexpectedly from their mouths in epigrams and slogans for that is how men preserve thought in the confusion of events. And their thought was the bitterest kind, arising out of hatred for a thing once loved, the self-consuming hatred of the betrayed, finding no adequate escape in cynicism or sophistry and only a self-hurt, an inner mockery, like confessing to crimes one has not committed.

"It is a great coincidence that we of these People's Guards Divisions should all have been former enemies of the People," a man said.

"I have thought of that," another said. "Undoubtedly *he* understands us."

"We must be grateful," another said, "for being given the opportunity to die this way."

Ivan was already asleep. It was the sleep of exhaustion before battle, lightly below the level of consciouness, with weariness pressing heavily against the brain, a revolving delirium that was like life: the sleep of the condemned.

Now he was talking with his son, now with his comrades of the Partisans, now in the disused factory, but always the exchange was articulated thought, always in his mind there was doubt: how much do men's actions affect history? How much are men the instrument of forces they cannot distinguish, but which they rationalize as being of their own volition, giving their inevitable actions the benefit of reasoning? What has made the history of Russia? Then where is the design, the plan, or had we merely words to suit the predetermined development? Is it possible for a man to divert history at a single point? Is it possible by one action to divert the course of events? Murder, assassination, war is then justified. Who, then, is to deny the principle of destroying all who stand in the way of history (which you believe to be your own action, but which you *know* to be the logic of greater forces). Death is the

answer. What *is,* is right. The rest is frustration, disillusion, uselessness, a burden to the swift denouement of history. We knew that in 1917. We were absolute!

In this light delirium the sophistry returned, echoing in the hollow caisson of his brain, repeating itself inescapably with unbearable compression. In the dream-work he was again struggling with the interrogators of the N.K.V.D., fighting against the will to confess, to make known his ultimate guilt, to tell everything, to appease their private god, to cleanse the conscience, but so great was his guilt, so vast, nothing he could say was big enough, wicked enough, cruel enough to meet the need, and as the Bozom bottle fell across his liver and kidneys he was laughing with love and pleasure for his suffering, and soon it was closing in on him, the blackness, the tension closing, the compression below the ocean, gathering on him, about to break, as it did suddenly with the snapping crack of a rifle shot.

A fusillade of rifle shots.

Every man in the old factory was on his feet. On the road in front of the factory an enemy motorcycle had slewed into a side drift. The motorcycle rider and the man sitting beside him in the sidecar were dead. As Ivan looked Lieutenant Barov walked over to the motorcycle and dragged the dead Fascist off the machine. He began unlacing the Fascist's pistol holster, regarding the weapon with a large grin of good-natured amusement.

"We ambushed them," he said as Ivan came up.

"There will be more of them," Ivan said.

"The one in the sidecar has a machine gun," Kostia said.

"Listen!"

The sound of tank tracks and a heavy combustion engine could be heard some distance off.

"They will be upon us," Ivan said. "Do you understand this weapon?" he asked Kostia.

"Like my wife," said Kostia, now holding the light weapon loosely in his hands, "beautiful."

"Take it and go to the thickets over there. Take these men with you." Ivan indicated the men who had made the ambush. "Take up positions covering the factory. When they send men to storm the factory cut them down. But hold your fire until then. When you have done this once change your positions. We will delay them and then we will withdraw from the rear of the factory and we will rejoin on the road at Khemki."

"This is it, Uncle," Kostia said.

Ivan pushed the motorcycle and the dead Fascists into the ditch beside the road. The men then took up positions inside the factory.

"They may attempt to clear the building with grenades or mortars," Ivan said. "Make them keep their distance with our fire. When it is too bad we will retire at the rear. It is an advance party. There are not enough men to surround us."

The sound of the tank could be heard distinctly now. Presently they could see it as it slumped around a bend in the road. It was a light tank. The turret lid was open and the tank captain stood with half his body above the tank top. He was looking forward. He wore earphones. There was a tall radio aerial like a coachwhip projecting from the rear of the tank.

About a hundred meters from the factory the tank stopped.

"He is looking at the wheeltracks of the motorcycle," Ivan said.

He had the hot prickling sensation at the back of the neck and the slight dryness of the tongue which comes of seeing the enemy at close range. At a hundred meters it might be possible, he thought. If I can pick him off now, that will be something. It is bad. But what else can we do against this thing? He did not reason with himself very long because he had an irrepressible desire to kill.

He took aim with his rifle and fired.

At the sound of his shot other men also discharged their rifles.

The tank captain disappeared into his tank. They heard

the sound of the rifle bullets whining as they ricochetted off the tank.

For a moment the tank did not move. Then the turret lid snapped shut. The tank backed up, turned around and went back the way it had come. About five hundred meters up the road, just out of effective rifle range, it stopped, turned and squatted, covering the factory with its light twenty millimeter cannon.

The men in the factory felt they had made a victory.

"They are waiting for infantry," Ivan said. He was excited, hoping for a brisk battle.

Then for an hour there was no change. They heard artillery in the distance and there were airplanes occasionally. It was December 5, 1941.

Presently the sound of the airplanes was much closer. Then the general sound became one continuous sound, growing louder, and now with a new note, a high scream, rising in pitch and volume.

Looking up into the sky Kostia saw the airplane directly above them. It was descending in a vertical dive, its proportions growing in size as it came nearer. Kostia looked at the factory and suddenly it seemed to be large and conspicuous and easily sighted in the landscape of snowy fields and birch thickets.

"Stuka!" Kostia cried. He shouted to the men in the factory. But already the noise of the plane was its own warning.

Looking up again, bending his neck back, Kostia saw the bomb leave the airplane, saw the plane nose up, screaming as it pulled out of the dive. Then Kostia was on his face, his body hugging the earth, his mouth open, his fingers to his ears.

The blast of the bomb flattened the birch thicket as though it had been grass and the sapling sticks whipped his back like rattan canes. Then there was the lesser faraway sound of falling debris, of crashing bricks and jangling

iron, to his shocked ears seeming kilometers distant but falling all around him.

At first he could see nothing because of the dry ochrous dust. Then as the dust cleared he saw that the factory building, which a moment before had seemed very large, had not been large, was now utterly demolished, the ancient bricks suddenly atomized, the timbers into matchwood.

Kostia looked up but there was no airplane.

He looked again at the dust-settling ruin of the factory, but there was no sign of life.

As he stood there, confused, shocked, undetermined, Kostia heard the sound of the tank which had not moved from its position on the road. He saw the tank begin moving toward the factory. Kostia took cover. He pushed his newly acquired machine gun forward and he waited. He had still his orders in mind.

As the tank approached Kostia saw movement in the factory ruin. A figure covered with dust, so covered with dry dust that it was the same color and pattern as its background, was edging, crawling, jerking out of the factory ruin. Kostia could not recognize the figure. At each slight projection of cover the figure paused as though to gain strength, but then it moved on until it had reached the ditch beside the road.

When the enemy tank had reached a position opposite this ditch Kostia saw the dust-covered figure rise up. At the same time he saw that it was Ivan, his white hair thick with dust, but still with the machine gun belt wrapped around his body. Kostia saw that he was gripping an armful of stick grenades, and as Kostia divined his purpose, he saw it accomplished. With a cry, "Dioosh!" that was the old battle cry of the Partisans, he flung himself in front of the tank so that the advancing tracks descended immediately on his bounty of explosives. Kostia saw the white blast of the grenades, saw the tank lurch aside, saw its nearside track ripped off like a rich woman's bracelet, saw the still dust-covered figure lying there, now still.

Kostia waited for the turret trap to open. This was the moment for his new weapon.

But before that could happen there was another sharp explosion. The tank shuddered and lurched and a gaping hole appeared in its turret. Bright white magnesium flames began to leap out of this gap. For a second Kostia thought the explosion had occurred inside the tank and then he heard the loud roaring sound of an approaching tank. He heard it and then he saw it. It came rumbling up the road from the direction of Moscow. It was painted white and it had wide tracks. It slewed past the burning enemy tank and went on up the road. Soon there was a second tank and then a third and a fourth. The fifth tank carried a number of infantrymen, men in sheepskin coats and fleece-lined caps, each man with a sub-automatic gun, all hanging close to the turret and top of the fast, roaring tank. Kostia stood looking at this in amazement. More tanks went by with their freight of infantrymen. And then infantrymen came trotting in single file at a fast pace down the side of the road. Looking at them, seeing them in their warm coats and new weapons, their freshness, seeing their brown faces and dark slant eyes, Kostia was suddenly overwhelmed.

"Siberians!" he cried.

With his three companions he moved toward the road and watched the stream of men and vehicles. Now there were guns, large guns and small guns, and trucks with ammunition. And more men and tanks. The men shouted at him and he shouted back. Overhead there were flights of white-painted airplanes with red stars on their wings.

Kostia stood by the ruined enemy tank. He looked at the torn, broken body of the man who had fought with them in the uniform of a high army officer. He looked sternly and sadly at this man.

"A true Muscovite," he said.

"A Russian," a comrade said.

"What was his name?" Kostia asked.

"Don't know."

"If I knew where he lived I would promise to visit his wife and tell her how he died."

At that moment a truck loaded with Red Army men went past. They shouted to Kostia. The moment was too much for Kostia. He looked at Ivan and then he looked at the truck loaded with men. He ran toward the truck and leaped lightly on the back of it.

GENERAL YAKOSOVSKY

There had been a great snowing since the beginning of the offensive. The roads were covered with deep drifts. But it had not been difficult to find the tank. The coachwhip radio aerial, now lashed with ice, still pointed skyward. The driver of the General's car drew up beside it. The General and the Commissar stepped out. The General's orderly and the driver followed them. The driver and the orderly kicked the snow off the turret of the tank and cleared a space around it so that the General and the Commissar could examine it.

"A Mark Three," the Commissar said.

"I don't think so," the General said. "One of their light reconnaissance tanks."

"How far is it from Moscow?" the Commissar asked the driver.

"We are five kilometers from Khemki," the driver said. "That would be twenty-five kilometers from Red Square."

"And this is the closest they came to Moscow," the General said.

"It is the closest they will ever come," the Commissar said.

"Close enough," the General said. "One more day, two days, and they might have reached Moscow."

"Our planning provided against that," the Commissar said.

The Commissar stamped his felt boots and slapped his mittened hands on his arms. The temperature was dropping with unusual rapidity. He wanted to get into the automobile and to go forward to their new command post where they would direct the decisive battle of Zubitsov.

But the General was walking around the tank and now he came to a halt at the place where the track had been blown off. This was the leeward side of the tank and in its shelter lay the frozen body of a man. The General could see that his arms had carried a number of hand grenades. Some of the hand grenades had failed to explode. But the General could see that the man had thrown himself under the tank and that the explosion of some grenades had immobilized the tank. What interested the General was the machine gun belt which was wrapped around the man's body, crossing each shoulder. The General leaned down and brushed the snow away from the man's head and shoulders. He noted that the collar of his greatcoat bore the marks of having carried the four bars of a full commander, reckoning by the old style.

"One of our Red Army men?" The Commissar was looking over the General's shoulder.

The General looked at the Commissar.

"A volunteer of the Sixth People's Guards Division," he said.

The General and the Commissar climbed back into the automobile. The General's orderly and the driver leaped into the front of the car. The driver accelerated the engine and the car pulled away.

Fifty kilometers ahead of them a great battle had begun. On the wide plain to the east of Rzhev, near the small town of Zubitsov, Von Boch's armored columns, temporarily pinched back by the advance of the Siberians, but now reinforced, were assembling for a mighty thrust toward Moscow. But General

Yakosovsky who commanded the Siberian army which had advanced through Moscow along the Rzhev road to Istra was not thinking deeply of the coming engagement. A few miles to the north of him there was Vlasov's column at Solnechnogorsk, north of Vlasov there was another column commanded by Kuznetsov, while north of that Leluschenko had surrounded Klin. On his southern flank, General Yakosovsky knew there was Govorov at Lokotnia while to the deep south Belov and Boldin were already smashing the spearheading advance of Guderian's four panzer divisions. And the weather was becoming colder. It would be a white winter. The Fascists did not know that yet, but it was in the bones of every Russian soldier. Soon they could expect temperatures of fifty degrees below zero and more snowstorms and that would halt all operations for six months.

General Yakosovsky had all this clearly in his mind, but he was thinking of none of it. Instead he was thinking of the man lying dead and frozen under the tank. He was thinking of the unmistakable insignia of his Partisanship and of the missing formal insignia. He was not thinking sentimentally of the man, but he was warmed by the remembrance. What warmed him was the knowledge that he himself was no longer alone.

Five months before General Yakosovsky had been in a prison. He had been in a prison nearly four years. He considered himself fortunate to have been in prison.

One day in Leningrad in 1937 he had resigned himself to being shot. He had been arrested and he was being interrogated. The interrogator said that he was a Polish spy. The interrogator had a long list of crimes which, he said, Colonel Yakosovsky had committed. Yakosovsky denied all the crimes and pointed to all his orders and decorations won in the war against the Poles. The interrogator said that Yakosovsky and others who were Poles had entered the Red Army at the time of the Civil War with the purpose of rising in the ranks to

positions of command so that they would be able to keep the Polish High Command informed of Soviet plans. Yakosovsky denied all this. The interrogator had made him stand against a wall. He had been standing against the wall for two days when a short stout man in the uniform of a colonel of the GPU had asked Yakosovsky why he was standing, as though it were a very natural question to ask. Then he had invited Yakosovsky to sit down. He had taken the papers relating to the case and, after examining them, had told the interrogator that his case was based on false information. Then the GPU colonel had gone away. The interrogator had been very angry at this, but he was not able to say anything against his superior officer at that moment, so he sent Colonel Yakosovsky to prison where he had remained until the Fascist invasion.

General Yakosovsky remembered all this without rancor. He had a fine, lean face with eyes which one expected to twinkle with friendly amusement, but which never did, but remained open and looked with candor at all about him. He was an intelligent and capable staff officer. He had been brought back by Shaposhnikov. Of the 820 officers who had formed the senior cadre of the Red Army in 1937 he was one of eighteen survivors. At that moment he himself did not know there were eighteen survivors. He thought that, after Shaposhnikov, he was the only survivor. He had not fully understood about the People's Guards Divisions which had been thrown in the way of Von Boch's advance to cause confusion and delay. But now, having seen the man beneath the tank, he understood very well indeed. He knew now that the tide had turned. He knew now that the decision which he had unhesitatingly made when they had brought him from prison and given him a command had also been made by thousands of other Russians. Not by thousands, but by millions, he thought.

"It was a matter of days," he said.

"What!" the Commissar said.

"We needed those days to detrain the Siberian Army," the General said. "Those extra days enabled us to assemble and concentrate."

"It was according to plan," the Commissar said.

"The People's Guards Divisions gave us those extra days."

"The *Khozin* knows what he is doing."

"The enemy command did not reckon on us moving the Siberians so quickly. They reckoned to be in Moscow before we could bring them up."

"The enemy knew nothing of the movement of the Siberians," the Commissar said.

The General said nothing for a moment. He did not care very much about talking with the Commissar. But he had his point to make.

"No?" he said. "Then how do you account for this?"

The General drew a paper from his map case. The paper said that the Japanese had attacked the American naval base at Pearl Harbor and the Philippines that day.

"Naturally the Japanese knew of our movement," the General said.

The General might have said more, but he did not care very much about the Commissar. He did not care how he spoke in front of the Commissar. No doubt the Commissar reported everything he said accurately. He believed accuracy was the new policy. But the General did not care very much. The Red Army was now so short of officers they would soon be giving these Commissars their own commands and then they could perform. And when the war was won it would be the Red Army that was strongest.

The Commissar appeared surprised at the news about Japan.

"It is nothing," the General said, "the war will be fought here in Russia. It is already won. Next year they will attack using the Volga to cover their right flank, but they will fail. It is inevitable that they fail."

The General felt that the tide had turned.

I said it was time for me to leave. There was a brief silence in the little room. I sensed there was some awkwardness.

"There is no need for Mitka to come with me," I said. "I shall find my way home."

Rachel said something quickly to Mitka, then, turning to me, she said that Mitka would take me to another exit where he would point out the way back.

I said goodnight to them, to Rachel and Lizavetta and Gregor and Mary. Mary had at last brought herself to the point of asking me whether I could do something for her two children. I left them all sitting in the little room where the small stove flickered, sitting there in the close atmosphere, talking on into the morning. Lizavetta helped me into my overcoat. As she did so she thrust a large envelope into my hand. I had forgotten my promise to take Karl's manuscript with me, but now I remembered. This, no doubt, was the important scenario. I pressed her hand firmly to let her know that I understood, then I followed Mitka into the outer hall. Instead of opening the big door through which we had entered Mitka conducted me down another passage. We went through a place where people were sleeping and I could hear heavy breathing, then through some kind of communal kitchen, judging from the smell, down another passage where the night air, blowing in from an unseen opening, was suddenly chilling. Finally we reached another hallway and Mitka unbolted a door and peered out. He turned to me.

"Turn left," he said. "Soon you see places of familiarity."

"Thank you," I said.

"It will be necessary to prove you are not a camel," he said.

"I have documents," I said.

"Goodnight," he said, grinning.

I stepped out into a wide street. It had been snowing during the evening, but now the air had cleared and there was the faint glow of a late rising moon. The street was not broad enough for any part of the inner boulevard system, yet it had the appearance of one of the new thoroughfares which cut through the old quarters under the new planning. Perhaps it was somewhere in the district of the Kropotkin gate. I wondered why Mitka had not brought me that way before.

I turned left and began walking. The street was empty. There was no movement, no living thing to be seen. The snow lay dry and thick so that my footsteps were soundless. The sound of a locomotive whistle, somewhere miles away to the north, was all that I could hear. I was suddenly cold with the sharp dangerous cold of a rapidly dropping temperature. I pulled my cap down over my ears and adjusted my coat collar. My breath, damping my scarf, froze in icy droplets. But the air and the night were brisk, sharp and delightful, and I strode forward with a sense of relief to have left that intense small room.

The glow of the waning moon rising over the rooftops left one side of the street in shadow, except where the snow, resting on ledges and gables, reflected in flat monotone the form of the buildings, as though one were looking at a photographic negative. The side of the street lying in the shadow was the new side, rebuilt when the street had been widened. It was a façade of moderately high apartment buildings in grey cement, bare of ornament except for flag-pole sockets and neoclassical mouldings. The side of the street coming into the light, I noticed with satisfaction,

was the old side, untouched for half a century or more. Here were the odd old houses, some standing behind private gates, some with pretentious porches, some in simple Georgian form, others Italianate, Romanesque, Gothic, all executed to please the taste of the new-rich of the nineteenth century, and yet a few houses in the style of the native carpenters, nail-less dovetailed joinery with window frames and doorways delicately cut out of pinewood in the artisan's own tradition, naïvely ornate like the design multiplied in a paper by a child who fancifully clips the edges of an octopule fold. No doubt I was somewhere near the Arbats. No streets anywhere I had been showed so much amusing virtuosity as those of the Arbats, nowhere was the age that preceded the Revolution so clearly reflected: the naked egotism and the uninhibited greed. Here in wood and stone and plaster the little men who (by virtue of their own talents, they stoutly believed) had amassed fortunes out of wheat and wool and timber and furs and the exploitation of a vast peasantry, sought to immortalize their special qualities, in imitation of the Czar: houses of every shape and size, designed for them by knavish Italian architects, pleasing to the illusion of individuality. Pleasant to walk silently and alone along this street, free to visualize the brilliant parties, the receptions, the sleighs with their tinkling bells and the fine horses snorting and steaming, all of which must have once enlivened the character of this street. I wondered how long it would be before it began again.

I was glad it had snowed, because the snow hid the meanness, the poverty and neglect of these former elegant dwellings. Moulding and architrave and ledge clung lovingly to the dry soft snow, releasing it only in little flutterings of white dust where the burden was too great, but there was still enough to hide the aching cracks, paint-hungry blisters, warped joints and worn stoops. The snow came with a bounty for all of Moscow, cloaking alike the old scars and

the new wounds, making drab squalor seem lovely in the sharp simple contrast of black and sparkling white, filling up holes in the pavements, solidifying mud, mending broken curbings and making culverts unnecessary. It turned the skyline into a joyous vision of cubist waves, proved the true function of onion domes, and made vistas of beauty even of the great latter-day desert squares.

Moscow was grateful to the snow, but its inhabitants may have been less appreciative. Nowhere was there any sign of life: no vehicle, no man or woman, no late worker whistling his way home, no revelers, no dog or cat; no street light burning, no blade of light creeping under a doorway or around the edge of a window blind; no sound. Yet under every one of those roofs lay a hundred or more souls, behind those sealed windows and bolted doors were people living in close promiscuity, crowded five, six, seven to a room, sleeping two, three, four to a bed, lying close together for warmth, sleeping the sleep of exhaustion, turning in labor or illness, making love, breathing heavily, snoring, coughing, coughing the never-ceasing cough, or lying awake, lying with empty stomachs, children whimpering with night hunger, thousands lying beneath those roofs, the warm-damp of their innumerable breaths clouding out in the unheated sub-zero rooms and already frosting the walls. Or, where there was heat, sitting the night through in close darkness, talking, forever talking, talking nervously, or boldly, talking to pass the time toward another day, thus to draw themselves, like animals belly-wounded in the hunt, out of the present into the hopeful future.

This great city and only myself stirring freely, carelessly, uncomprehendingly, my foreign passport and curfew-card in my pocket.

Foreigners liked Moscow for this: because the poorest Embassy clerk was richer than any Russian in food, in clothes, in warmth, in shelter, richer in privilege, and secure. The foreigner's security, of which he was never

properly conscious, made the Slavic mystery: failing to recognize the symptoms of endemic fear, or of pride paralyzed by constantly living in fear, he failed to recognize his status alongside the bureaucracy which was the instrument of fear; and so it was convenient to rationalize about oriental suspicion, classical isolation, the eternal Russian character, to say the Russians had never known freedom, thus creating a romantic myth better suited to Tanu Tuva or Tibet than Moscow. For Moscow (hear that locomotive shriek!) was only one more populous industrial city in a shrinking industrial world, only temporarily less accessible than Minneapolis, Manchester, Madras or Melbourne, with problems of unemployment, production and distribution, and a people with similar needs, capacities, hopes, differing now only in respect of the pressures bearing upon them. It was an error to think such pressures might not yet be borne upon Minneapolis, Manchester, Madras or Melbourne.

There were also foreigners who never came to Moscow who liked to involve the city in their rationalizations about the success of socialism, either claiming more for the people of Moscow than they had, or less than they had; proving the soundness of this or that revolutionary theory by the progress made at Moscow, or attributing a temporary retrogression to practical difficulties encountered in Moscow. These controversies added heavily to the burden of the Muscovites by making the condition of their lives a myth of world politics. For it became important that none should know how people lived under those snow-packed roofs.

The street gave on a wide boulevard with an avenue of trees at its center. I followed the boulevard for a short distance seeking some point of recognition. I saw a statue and walked over to it and stood beneath it. The snow lay snugly on the statue's head, on the tip of his nose and on his cloak, but there was a fierce personality staring out from beneath that disguise. It was a statue of Gogol. The letters of his name stood out boldly on the pedestal. In the cold

empty street the great man stared down at me as though I were a soul eligible for collection. I had thought him a milder man, but then I remembered *Taras Bulba* and other matters. For a moment I had the fancy to be a Moscow student of the last century. I would be wearing a high battered hat and a threadbare cloak, fancy waistcoat and tattered boots, and I would be walking along a vast boulevard on either side of which were immense statues, the snow soft underfoot and touching the robes of the great who would be staring down on me: Gogol, Turgeniev, Pushkin, Lermontov, Ostrovsky, Tolstoy, Goncharov, Chekov, Dostoievsky, Gorki, Kuprin, Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov, Mussorgsky, Tchaikowsky, and a score of others, all staring down at a ragged wastrel student kicking the snow with his tattered boots, caring not for comfort, or for soothing work, or for pleasure, but only for his role in history, the integration of ideas and life.

It was an entertaining fancy. But suddenly the ragged student, idly kicking the snow with his tattered boots, was taken with fear.

"Halt!"

Two *militsia* in dark blue overcoats, muffled against the cold, their fleece caps pulled down over their ears, stood a few yards behind me, the Russian sub-automatic machine guns pointing at me, their trigger fingers bared through holes in their mittens. They had advanced softly and I had not heard their footsteps.

"Documents, if you please," one man said.

"O.K.," I said.

"Foreigner?"

"Yes."

"Also your passport."

I tendered the documents, feeling the cold biting sharply on my gloveless hand.

Both *militsia* bent over the documents, carefully deciphering the words, checking the dates, stamps and various in-

scriptions I had never bothered to read. They were not in haste. I stood there, now conscious of the cold.

"Name?"

"James Ferguson," I said.

It was not a name they could pronounce, nor could they decipher it. They were whispering together. I guess that one of them wanted to take me to the nearest precinct station to double-check on me. It had happened before.

But the smaller man, a squat pig-eyed little man, clearly did not want to be bothered. It was nothing, he said to the other, a taller, younger man.

At last the taller, younger man, gave me the documents. I put them in my pocket and turned to walk away. But the young man restrained me. I felt that his arm was as hard as iron.

"Why did you stand here?" he said.

"I look at the statue," I said, indicating Gogol. "I have not seen the statue before. See, it is a statue of Gogol, the writer."

"It is not suitable to look at statues at this time of night," the young man said. He was very austere. He was not impressed with my explanation.

The other *militsia* said something which I did not overhear.

"All right, you can go," the young man said.

There was nothing to argue about. The ragged student who had been kicking his tattered boots in the snow beneath the eyes of last century's great, walked across the boulevard and down the street on the other side.

It was an ugly street. A street of modern institutions, large grey cement buildings, as pretentious in their outdated modernity as the merchants' houses, but less amusing. Between the institutions were tenement buildings of the former times, cheap dwellings built for slum rentals, unimproved since the last brick was laid.

But the blighted student, whose fancy had been so rudely interrupted, was thinking that, after all, these were the in-

heritors. These young ones with the soulless eyes and the thin faces and hollow temples, these had the right to live. And who could say that what they thought was not the truth and what they did was not the true way of life, for history takes no account of mistakes, of those left spinning endlessly in the eddies of the main stream, no account of moral codes but only of successful morality which is survival. These were the survivors, these young mindless ones who mirrored every inflection of their leader's mood, who were full of pride and austerity, and had bodies like iron. These were the ones who had nothing to remember, read not for understanding but in the catechism of faith, but who had the power to act, who knew the meaning of action, putting action above life, despising life as life, accepting its rigors above pleasure, taking and rendering life, as the sacrificial generation. This was the way history was going, thought the ragged student, all else was for the ashcan, emotional and literary garbage.

How bitter one can become over a trifling encounter with a policeman.

In this city of dead souls, spirits yielded in serfdom, collected on paper and traded over desks of war, it was natural that the pure physical man, the soulless, feelingless man should arise, armored against sentiment, ethical considerations, archaic moralities, preserving himself only in the flesh, but a flesh encased in thick hide so better to feel painlessly the whip of his master.

The street ended suddenly and I was facing a wide plaza. There in front of me was the Kremlin!

At the same instant the waning moon shone brightly and the old city was touched with sharp shadows. Every rampart of the crenelated walls was laden with snow as were the towers. Behind the walls were the onion-shaped domes of the Uspenski and Archangelsk cathedrals also with their coat of snow. And the Bell Tower of Ivan the Terrible and on the other side the tall spire of the Spasski clock. All lay

silent in the silent city, the moon-shadows and the snow-filled ledges shaping the strange mixture of Byzantine, Gothic, Romanesque, Florentine, Georgian and Victorian architecture. On every spire a large black star. Here it was, the Asiatic mystery, the meeting of East and West: the Palace of the Patriarchs, the Cathedral of the Twelve Apostles, the Teren or Woman's Palace, the tombs of the Czars, the Czar's Armory and the Czar's Cannon, Lenin mummified, the Granovitya Palace for receptions, motion picture halls, rooms full of music boxes, rooms for the secret departments, archives, labyrinth of underground chambers, electric elevators, a letter box for anonymous informers, the Assembly of the People's Commissars, all sheltering behind that high, brick wall with its faked ramparts and towers, designed, with insight, by an operatic Italian. But the snow lay quietly over it all, clinging to the flattened domes and thin spires, giving it the appearance of an enormous confection, for which the confectioner had sufficient icing only for the greater prominences.

Yet it was curiously beautiful and, by inescapable association, foreboding.

As I looked at it, aided by the last of the moonlight, a large black limousine drove out of the portcullis doors and sped toward me.

It was followed by a second and a third car.

The meeting for tonight is over, I said to myself, the plans for the day are laid and the Marshals and the Commissars depart.

As I stood musing there was a shout.

"Halt!"

I was surrounded by guards in dark military coats. I had not seen them come, but they were all around me. Some had automatic weapons, but several were armed only with pistols. They did not draw their weapons, nor did they touch me.

As they stood there the big black limousines flashed by

going up the street whence I had come, the tires squeaking on the fresh snow.

I produced my documents.

An officer studied them closely. This time they were not given back to me. I understood that this time I should have to go to the precinct headquarters.

MARY ANDERSON

The way they talk makes me nervous. When they talk like that it is very bad. It means that nothing matters any more. It was like that a year ago when the Fascists were outside Moscow; now it is worse because millions have died and there is hunger and work without rest and another winter coming; our armies retreat, a tide of blood flows down the Volga and the foreign capitalists watch us bleed to death and do nothing. So they talk, because there is no danger greater than that which they now risk: what can they do to them, what can they take away from them now?

They talk to ease suspense, but the foreigner understands nothing of this. He is a nice man from the outside world and he is as I once was: he knows nothing. And because he is himself secure he cannot feel as we do, nor is it possible to tell him. Is it possible that he could do something for the children? No, it is not possible. I know there is no hope for them, but something makes me try. They are American children and they deserve the American heritage. The foreigner does not know (I did not tell him) that in a few months my son Robert, who is twelve, will be sent away to

a trade school and then I shall never see him again. They will take him and make a mechanic out of him, just as they make machines, and he will be sent to the Urals and I shall never see him again. If I had become a Party member it might be different. If I were a Party member in good standing Robert Junior would go to a special gymnasium. Is it possible that I could become a Party member? I would do anything. I would learn all the things. I would work hard. I would be disciplined. I would live a pure life. I would be devoted. What! Now! One foreign born, the wife of a foreigner! I must get control of myself. I am becoming hysterical.

It is possible that the foreigner could save my children. Foreigners have influence in high places. Some even enter the Kremlin. A word in someone's ear! They say it is *Blatt* which keeps Russia going. Always I keep thinking of my children. Rachel talks to the foreigner about her son too. Is it possible she thinks he could save Karl? That is not what is in her mind. She is too wise for thát. Besides she is too proud to ask help of a foreigner; she is all Russian. What then is behind their talk? Why do they talk about Karl? They have some secret. There is something in the minds of them all: in Rachel's mind, in Gregor's mind, in the mind of Lizavetta and this Mitka. It is there, but they have not spoken of it, neither to themselves, nor to others. Yes, there is a plot! I am certain of it. I sense that atmosphere which it is possible to sense in the character of a Russian: the impending violence. But what can the foreigner do for them? They pretend secrecy, the foreigner imagines there is secrecy, but they know all is known. Is it some madness? Is it some anarchy?

I must not come here again. I must exchange my apartment for another. This is no place to be if they are plotting some madness. Does the foreigner know that even now he is walking homeward along "The Route?" Of course, he knows nothing of The Route. He comes from a peaceful

country where assassination is unheard of. He does not know that this street has been made specially wide and straight so that those from the Kremlin can travel fast to their country *dachas*. He does not know that everybody who lives in apartments along this street, The Route, must have a special stamp on his or her passport, must be reviewed and passed by Them. He does not know this. He does not understand this country because he comes from a democracy. But if there were a plot everybody would be involved! Is it possible that they would have some such madness in mind? Such a thing would cause the death of hundreds. More than that. Thousands. Millions. There would be no end to it.

Oh, it fills me with fear. I, too, would be shot; but I am nothing. What would happen to my sons? Would they be left to wander about the street, begging for food and a place to sleep, because our apartment would be sealed up? Would they become homeless ones, what they call *bezsprizorni?* Such a thing would be a monstrous madness. Such a thing would be the act of a mad man or a mad woman. It must be stopped before it happens. It could be stopped. There are the letter boxes for that purpose. None need know from whom the letter comes.

But, no, I cannot: where would it end?

I slept late. When Madame Udanova came for my Russian lesson I was in my dressing gown. The old servant shuffled in with tea and biscuits and we sat down to morning gossip. I was glad to have Madame Udanova come, because the morning was not something to be alone with: the grey light through the window, the drear sobriety; and the recollection of the drunken soldier being kicked in the belly, in the groin, in the chest, in the buttocks, solemnly and steadily kicked.

Madame Udanova sipped her tea, good Ceylon tea steaming in the glass, and nibbled the sweet biscuit with a too-fine delicacy, no crumb escaping through her fingers. I avoided seeing it. She was probably not starving, probably received a number-three ration which meant she had thin noodle soup and a slice of black bread spread with red caviar to look forward to for lunch, a half-pound of bread with tea for supper and another half-pound of bread for tomorrow's breakfast. I often wanted to ask her what she thought about the system of preserving the cadres, but I knew I would get the regulation answer, and anyway since she had relatives in Leningrad it was a cruel question. She was disappointed that I had not learned the case-endings thoroughly. She thought I was not taking her seriously, and behind this was the fear of losing her job, the job which brought her the daily tea and biscuits and enough rubles to buy milk on the peasant market.

"I was at the play last night," I said.

"You went to the Arts Theatre?" she said.

"Yes, to see *Lower Depths*."

"It is very artistic, yes?"

"I believe they specialize in naturalism," I said.

"It is true to life."

"I would like to offer them some hints."

"Yes."

"Some points on how the underdog is treated. Say, a scene with a policeman kicking a drunk in the stomach."

Madame Udanova looked uncomfortable.

"The theater is the opium of the people," I said.

"What is that?" Madame Udanova dropped a crumb.

The envelope containing Karl's scenario was lying on my desk. It looked as if there were about ten thousand words. All in Russian. I played with the idea of asking Madame Udanova to translate it for me. Then I dismissed the idea. How it would embarrass her! And God knows what was in the thing.

"Listen," I said, "why not take the rest of the biscuits home to the children?"

"Oh, no thank you."

"Yes, I insist. They will be nice for the children."

I made up a small parcel of the remaining biscuits, wrapping them in a table napkin, wondering how long it would be before it became the accepted thing for Madame Udanova to take home whatever was left on the plate after our morning teas. I was impatient with Madame Udanova this morning. Our conversation had not gone well. This was Friday and I was glad she would not be coming again for a couple of days.

I helped her into her coat. She shook hands vigorously. She was about to leave when the door of my room burst open and little Vitalia came in.

"'Ullo, Zhimmy!" she said.

"Hello," I said.

Then Vitalia saw Madame Udanova standing there and the expression in her eyes changed: it was not exactly fear, but boldness in the face of fear, all in a passing second. Vitalia let go the door handle and stood aside. Without looking at

Vitalia, Madame Udanova walked out of the room. The expression in Vitalia's eyes had been momentary. She now walked into the room with an air of cheeky assurance.

"Who she?" she asked.

"That is my language teacher, Madame Udanova," I said.

"Ah, she teach you Russian," Vitalia laughed, tossing her blond head.

"Where did you spring from?" I said.

"I have been the night with Charlie," she said.

"The hell you have," I said, "isn't that against Legation rules?"

"Sto?"

"It's forbidden. *Verboten?"* I said.

"Who say? All mens sleep with girls."

"Yes, but not in the Legation," I said.

"This not Legation," she said, "this *pribavka* for sleep."

"You're learning," I said. "Something Charlie told you?"

"Certainly."

"Do you like Charlie?"

She did not answer. She came up to me and put both her arms around my neck. It was something she had seen in the movies.

"You learn Russian," she said. "You like speak with Soviet girls?"

"Yes," I said.

"I teach you. *Glasè, nosè, röt* . . ." she said, laying a finger in turn on my eyes, nose and mouth.

"Listen," I said, "you're Charlie's *devoshka.* Not mine."

"Zhimmy, you are funny man."

She took her hands from my neck and went over to my bed in the corner of the room. She sat on the edge of the bed, swinging a little on the springs, then she lay back on my pillows. She looked at me without smiling, her eyelids lowered over her bright hazel eyes. The attitude was so studied, so much in the style of a Vamp, that I wanted to laugh. It was a silly attitude; she was so young; she paraded her sex; she lacked

subtlety, fascination, glamour; and her hands and feet were large. But I did not laugh. The truth was my body was suddenly flushed and then urgent with desire for her. In all the months I had been in Russia this was the first time I had felt like that about a woman: and now I felt it hard.

Vitalia was sixteen. Charlie Sommers, always with his noble nose to the ground, had met her at a newspaper party at the Metropole. She had been wearing the rough clothes of a Red Army Komsomolka when she first appeared, now she was wearing a silk dress and light patent-leather shoes; they had not been bought for her by Charlie or any other foreigner; nor had any foreigner paid for the lacquered nails or the blonded hair. The transformation from Komsomolka to *Sharleona* had been swift and full of interest for Charlie and his friends. The bored Komsomolka tasting the mysterious forbidden fruit of the Metropole; the unbelievably naïve idea of foreign debauchery; then the disdain of foreigners turning to delight; suddenly the new clothes, the new seriousness, the affected sophistication: it was a familiar enough story. What made it always good was the freshness of these girls and the fact that they wanted nothing.

Vitalia lay back on my bed, looking at me steadily under her lowered eyelids, still so young as to be testing the power of her attraction, already gaining confidence in it as I weakened, soon to be arrogant with it, always excited by it: the hard young body, yes, still innocent, the young firm muscular body which she would use eagerly, without timidity or fear or lack of self-knowledge, vigorously, believing vigor the essence of sophistication, and no improvisations.

I went over to the bed.

"What did you come up here for?" I said.

"Charlie wants *papyrosa*."

"No cigarettes today, Vitalia."

"Zhimmy, let us go to the foreign shop, eh."

"No shop today. I've used all my rations."

"Who you give *papyrosa,* Zhimmy? Everybody know Zhimmy has cigaretten."

"I smoke them."

"Zhimmy give *papyrosa* to Vitalia, Dynamia, Mia. No! Everybody know Zhimmy smoke only Amerikanski cigaretten. No *Russe Papyrosa,* eh Zhimmy?"

"Mind your own business," I said.

"Zhimmy has vodka from shop?"

"No."

"Who you give vodka to, Zhimmy?"

"Nobody."

"Zhimmy has secret girl, huh?"

"No."

"You have Madame Udanova?"

"You little bitch!"

The anger, which was something apart from the conversation, stirred Vitalia. She did not laugh, nor did she toss her head in the manner I expected. Instead there was an expression of child-like uncertainty in her face; the sophistication was, after all, duco thin.

At that moment there was a knock on my door and Charlie Sommers came in.

"Thought I would find you here," Charlie said.

"Listen," I said, "I wish you would keep Mata Hari out of my room."

"What's the matter?" Charlie said. "She's crazy about you."

"I thought she was your girl," I said.

"I'm madly in love with her," Charlie said, "but she says she loves you."

"It is true. I love Zhimmy." Vitalia turned her back on us. Going over to my desk she took up one of the copies of *Life* which Madame Udanova had declined and began turning the pages.

"Well, that makes it all simple," I said. "I take her over from

you. Just like that. And you develop along some new line. Mia or someone."

"Not Mia," Charlie said, "there's a new one called Julia. A little peach. Anyhow you haven't got a girl, or have you?"

"It is true. Zhimmy hasn't got a girl," Vitalia said. She was sitting in my chair at my desk reading my copy of *Life*.

"You seem to know everything," I said. "Listen, Charlie, I've got to shave. Do you mind?"

"Not 'tall, old boy." Charlie followed me into the bathroom. "Not a bad room you have here. Rather good, in fact. Cunning fellow, aren't you." He sat on the toilet seat while I lathered my face.

"You can have it," I said. "I'm sick of the whole thing. I'm sick of Moscow. I'm sick of all these spies and informers hanging around. I've been here too long.

"Don't insult hard-working girls," Charlie said. "You know you're a special assignment now."

"What do you mean?"

"For example, where were you last night? You're giving everybody such a lot of trouble, dodging about like you have been lately."

"Stop it, Charlie. If anyone wants to know where I was last night they can check with the Arts Theatre and the headquarters of the Arbats precinct. That's where I spent the night."

"I see. So you got picked up."

"They took me to the vag. entrance by mistake and I saw them working on a drunken soldier. They were kicking the tripes out of him, systematically, with those boots of theirs."

"Never a pleasant thing to see."

"When they remembered I was a foreigner, they pushed me through to another section and some police officer had them all saluting and goose-stepping about the place. They had my documents. They knew the documents were in order. But they kept me until the curfew ended."

"Talk louder and more slowly," Charlie said, "so she can understand."

"Oh hell," I said, "do you think she would remember it straight, even if she could understand?"

"All the better if she doesn't. Because there is that little hiatus between the end of the first act—yes, I saw you leave—and, when was it, two or three in the morning?"

I put down my shaving brush. "Listen Charlie . . ." I began.

"You know," Charlie said, "sometimes I say to myself I say: 'Old Ferguson must belong to the Opposition all right because he certainly doesn't approve of what's going on around here. Now, everybody else is so damn pleased it's the Russians what's getting killed and not us, but old Jimmy's a deep one, so help me God, you could never guess what he's up to."

"Oh, drop it, Charlie. It's nothing to joke about."

"All I wanted to say, in my usual delicate way, is that I know exactly how you feel. It's the atmosphere. It's this thing at Stalingrad that's getting on everybody's nerves."

"I'm sick of it. I should like some leave."

"Oh, no, you don't. Not before me."

"Well, I should like to be left alone. If they'd only come and ask me I'd tell them exactly what I think about their bloody country."

"There's a certain point to your adjective. But I rather think they don't care what you think. In fact they don't care much about *you* at all. It's their own Russians they're worried about. All they wish to know is where you've been and who you've been talking to."

"They can all go to hell."

It was foolish to talk like this. I felt that I had been somehow tricked into a silly conversation. I was saying things I did not mean at a level I did not like. Somewhere there was a vast irritation which I should have liked to quell, but there was nothing to come to grips with, except empty-headed Charlie Sommers.

"Well, don't let it get you down," Charlie said. "They work on the basis that every man has a woman somewhere. Take my advice and if you want the girl you've got tucked away somewhere to remain in peace then make use of Vitalia here."

"Thanks," I said. "It comes back to the same thing."

"You're a queer one, Ferguson."

"Maybe."

"Damme if I don't think it might not be a girl after all. If it isn't a girl, it's worse, because that would be politics."

"Don't let it worry you, Charlie. Just keep it simple."

"That's right, keep it simple. You know my principle is give them something to work on. I'll let you into a little secret. Down in my room there's an old copy of Jane's *Fighting Ships*. Hallowed publication. But I have it marked all over in red: TOP SECRET. I borrowed the Old Boy's rubber stamp to do it with. Well, every time I go to bed with one of the little dears I tear out a page from my Jane's and give it to her. Sometimes two or three pages a night. You'd be touched how eager the little things are to have the pages when I explain that here is a picture and all the specifications of a British battleship. So far I've done all the battleships except the KG5. I need the KG5 for diagrammatic purposes. But still I've got a number of cruisers and then there's all the light cruisers and destroyers and submarines. Think how impressed they'll be with the submarines. After that, there's the American Navy. And what's wrong with the Brazilian Navy? It's terrific stuff. I suppose the little dears take it back and give it to some bloke at the Lubianka. Tremendous success! A Soviet patriot! Now, take my advice, old boy, do likewise. Give the buggers something to work on. Keep them occupied. Keep 'em happy. Keep 'em off the scent."

"Do you think it keeps them off the scent?"

"No."

"What else do you think of besides fornication, Charlie?"

Charlie pondered. "Sometimes," he said. "Sometimes I think how bloody the whole thing is. But it doesn't pay. Doesn't pay. Found that out long ago. Maybe you think you can do something about it."

"I don't."

Charlie got up off the toilet seat. "Then don't be such a damned puritan," he said. "Remember the hormones are on their side."

He went out of the bathroom. I sluiced my face and hands. The water wasn't hot enough for a bath.

Suddenly Charlie put his head in the door.

"What I really came up to say was have you got any vodka?"

"No," I said.

"Doesn't matter. You'll be coming to the party, won't you? Down in my room. Come early. I'm fixing supper."

"All right," I said, "but I've got to see a bloke at the American Embassy."

"Don't bother," Charlie said, "Smithy will be here. Ask him. He knows all the dirt."

"Thanks," I said. "It was Smithy I was going to see."

"Don't forget to bring Mata Hari," Charlie said. He was already opening the door.

"What's that!" I shouted. "Aren't you taking her with you now?"

"Couldn't do that," Charlie said, going out. "Remember she's crazy about you."

Vitalia was sitting in my chair at my table. The copy of *Life* was before her. She was looking intently at its pages.

"You can borrow it if you wish," I said.

"Sto?"

"You can take it home with you," I said.

I peered over her shoulder to see what she was looking at. She had the magazine open at a page of advertising. I had to look twice to discover what the advertising was about.

"You understand?" I said.

"Ne ponimaya."

"It's hard to explain," I said. "Women's things."

"For women *mesyachny?*"

"Yes."

Suddenly the intelligence of the advertisement, with its delicate circumlocution, dawned through Vitalia's fragmentary English. She looked shocked. She put her hand over the advertisement as though to conceal it from her eyes. Then she took her hand away and looked again.

"Ochen nekulturny," she said

"Some people in America think it's uncultured too," I said, "but they're out of date."

Vitalia thrust the magazine away. I picked it up and turned back to the advertisement. It has never struck me before: there were at this moment no drugstores in Moscow, no pharmacies, no shops of any kind where such articles could be purchased, nor for that matter any place where even a cake of soap could be bought. The sale of such things, if they were available, were restricted to the special shops within the leading commissariats.

Vitalia took the magazine again and looked it its pages. The advertisement appeared to fascinate her.

She pointed at the illustration. It was a picture of a slim young woman playing a vigorous game of tennis.

"In America it is like that?" Vitalia said.

"Yes."

"American womans like that?"

"Yes."

"Lies and propaganda!"

"Maybe it's not possible. I don't know," I said. "Maybe American women are super-women. Very strong."

Vitalia looked at me, testing my seriousness.

"Russian women very strong," she said.

"They have to be," I said. "Look at the way they work."

"Russian women very strong, but many have no *mesyachny*. Too much work. No food."

"As tough as that," I said.

"Is advertisement?"

"Yes," I said. "They are urging people to buy their little wares."

Vitalia studied the advertisement closely. There was a small, insignificant drawing of the product in one corner.

"Is this?"

"I guess so," I said.

"Here," Vitalia said, "we have only *Pravda.*"

"You mean the newspaper," I said.

Vitalia did not answer.

"Is that why women stand in queues for the newspapers?"

Vitalia looked at me with scorn. "Newspapers useful for everything. For fire. For bed. For wear."

"Well," I said, unable to resist the observation, "I am glad to hear that the official Party has a useful function."

The advertisement continued to hold Vitalia's attention. I sensed that there was dawning in her mind some, hitherto unrealized, feeling of loss. In another second I expected the purport of the rich, sumptuous American way of living, as depicted in this magazine, to dawn on her mind, overwhelming the resistance carefully planted there against such a contingency.

But suddenly she stiffened her lips and her young eyes took on the glaze of unseeing which is one of the characteristics of the mental state.

"All lies and propaganda," she said.

"Perhaps it is," I said, "although an American mightn't think so. I suppose if you live in America, or any other capitalist democracy, you build up a resistance to advertising."

"Here is no advertising," Vitalia said.

"That's so," I said. "Neither are there any consumer goods."

"Many lies not good," Vitalia said.

"You get your lies another way," I said.

"Kak?"

"On the radio," I said. "All day long in every street you hear that damn radio blaring away."

Vitalia looked puzzled. "Radio is lies?" she said.

"And what lies!" I said.

"Not lies. I hear voice of *Khozin*. I hear his own voice. Lie not possible."

"That's what I mean."

She looked at me with an expression of puzzlement. Now that she had forgotten her role as Vamp the expression in her eyes was one of delicious candor. The childlike earnestness, the lack of dissimulation or any quality which could be called reserve, the impression that what was in her mind was right there in her eyes, touched the heart. At the same time she was bold, firm in her feelings, and not easily swayed.

I had the feeling that I had unwillingly, almost unknowingly accepted the part of an alien corrupter of this conditioned ignorance. How could I enter upon any arguments touching the advantages of democracy and all that? And did I wish to? What was it to me, after all? Why shouldn't she continue to believe the word of God? Whose prerogative to plant the worm of skepticism? And so on.

"Why not look at the editorial pages?" I said. "Personally I can't bear to look at all those advertisements, lies or no lies. Those well-packed refrigerators, those cans of tomato soup! Let us look at the pictures, Vitalia."

I turned the pages of the magazine. They fell open at a series of pictures taken during a strike riot. They were the good sharp pictures of violence such as Americans like to look at.

"See," I said, "this is a strike riot. The police are beating the picketers down with their sticks. Look at this man down on the ground."

Vitalia appeared indifferent.

"Aren't you interested in the fate of workers in another country?" I said.

"Workers? Where workers?"

"These men here," I said.

"Not workers," Vitalia said.

"Of course they're workers," I said.

"Lies and propaganda," Vitalia said. "Look at men's clothes. Look at men's *shuba.*" She laughed with the air of one proudly exposing a fake. "Not clothes of workers. Clothes of capitalists."

"That's the way workers dress in America," I said.

"For making photograph, eh?" She was humoring me.

"No," I said. "It is true that many workers in America own automobiles."

"Not true," Vitalia said, conclusively. "Only capitalists have *machina.* I see plenty other pictures of Negroes. Clothes like clothes of Soviet workers. American workers mainly Negroes. Is well known."

"Oh hell," I said. "I give up. God knows, I'm no apologist for the American way of life."

Vitalia laughed.

"Well, what about yourself?" I said. "Look at your shoes. Soviet workers haven't got shoes like those. You're in a class above the workers."

Vitalia did not understand my fast, indignant speech, but at the word "shoes" she thrust out her feet with the new patent-leather shoes. She was proud of them, and pleased that I had noticed them. Her feet were large and beneath the stockings there were strong muscular calves. She noticed me looking at her legs. She was smiling archly.

"Farmer's legs," I said.

She was immediately indignant. Her face clouded with anger and injured pride. I had touched something deeper than I had intended.

"Vitalia no *kolkhoznik,*" she said. "See, no *kolkhoznik* have these." She kicked her legs so that the shoes flashed in the light.

"Where did you get them, anyway?"

She ignored the question. She was still angry.

"I no *kolkhoznik,*" she repeated. "I belong Soviet cadres."

"That's pretty obvious, too," I said.

"*Sto?*"

"Never mind," I said. "Look at these pictures. Here is the story of the class struggle in America. Only the Americans don't know it and the pictures appear in a capitalist magazine."

"What is 'class struggle'?" she said.

She looked at me with an air of bland innocence.

"You call it something else," I said, "probably class *boreba* or something."

"Ah," she said. There was indifference and boredom in her face.

"Well, we needn't go into that," I said, "but doesn't the injustice of the thing mean anything to you? Look at the man on the ground with the blood all over his head. And the police with their clubs out. Here is a picture of one policeman with his pistol drawn."

I could not change the expression on her face. Probably because I was not myself sincere. The violence meant nothing to her. The action was not itself exciting.

"I expect you've seen many things like that," I said.

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Nothing like that in Russia," she said.

"Bunk," I said. "Why, last night I saw a Red Army man being kicked by a policeman. He was drunk and he was being systematically kicked in the belly and the chest and all over by one of your *militsia.*"

A look of perplexity was in her face.

"Zhimmy," she said, "you are funny."

"It wasn't funny," I said. "I saw it."

"Was Red Army soldier?"

"Yes."

She shook her head. "Him for *shtrafnaya rota,*" she said.

"What is *shtrafnaya rota?*"

"Where you see?"

"At the *militsia* place in the Arbats." I could see her registering the place in her memory. "If you want it for the book," I said, "I'll write it down."

"Zhimmy, where you go last night?"

"Mind your own business."

"At late time you not here. I look."

"I was picked up by the police for being out after the curfew hour," I said.

"Curfew? You visit friends, eh?"

"Listen, Vitalia, we're going to have big quarrel if you don't mind your own business. I don't like spies. I don't like being spied on."

The word suddenly reminded her of her role as Vamp. She lowered her eyelashes and looked up at me with what was intended to be an alluring expression. She leaned her young body against me, leaned her hot young body against mine. I wanted to laugh, but there was that real challenge in her young sensuality which made me instead catch my breath with a sudden warm surge of desire for that body.

"Vitalia," I said, "it's time you went. I have to dress. Besides, there would be a scandal if it were known that you had been here all night.

"*Scandale!*" she repeated.

"Yes," I said. "You would be forbidden to come here again."

For a moment the Vamp dissolved and the young *kolkhoznik* appeared. It was touching how easily the pose of sophistication could be disturbed.

"Please go now," I said.

The *kolkhoznik* looked downcast. Obediently she rose and began walking toward the door, dragging her feet like an unwilling schoolgirl.

"Aren't you taking the magazine?" I said.

"No." Pouting.

"You're afraid to take it home," I said.

"Why?" Indifference.

"En-kay-vay-day."

She turned suddenly. "You know *En-kay-vay-day?"* she said.

"Sure," I said.

"Oh." She had reached the door. She was downcast again.

"Goodbye," she said.

"Goodbye," I said.

She went out. The door closed.

I was feeling pretty good about throwing her out of my room. It paid to be firm with them.

As I was thinking this the door burst open again. Vitalia rushed in, ran up to me, kissed me full on the lips.

"No spy on you, Zhimmy," she said.

In another moment she had run out of the room.

I was frowning. Then I began smiling. I was satisfied with myself. But now I knew that my satisfaction arose from a challenging and warm encounter with an attractive young woman.

I continued to be satisfied until I noticed that the envelope containing Karl's scenario which had lain on my table was missing.

KOSTIA

About three o'clock in the afternoon the Fascist guns had the range of Kostia's battery. All that day the mortars had remained hidden in a fringe of the wood. There were fir trees there and they gave cover from the air. For a long time the Fascists had not known where the mortar bombs were coming from and this pleased the captain very much.

But then the Fascist observers must have noticed the snow shaking down from the boughs of the fir trees every time the mortars fired, or else they had sound locators, for suddenly the enemy shells began to straddle them.

The first shell fell twenty meters short of the battery and Kostia said, "Hello, Uncle, here they come. . . ." The captain was watching the firing through binoculars. Then he went to the range-finder and gave the battery the range of the Fascist guns. They were 120-millimeter howitzers and they were that close to the Russian position. The captain planned counter-battery fire. A second shell fell in the wood behind them and after the detonation Kostia could hear the snow softly sliding off the branches of the fir trees. The third shell knocked out Number 2 mortar, killing Andrenko and Petrov. A fragment went through the captain's temple like a needle. Kostia went to the range-finder and corrected the fire of the remaining mortar. "Just one good one," Kostia was saying, "just one good one to keep them down." He began swearing hard and the swearing was still in his mouth when the fourth shell got him.

It was night and snowing when Kostia recovered consciousness. He had a high fever. His mouth was dry and burning and he ate some snow without moving his head. He could feel his body only as a bulk. He thought that the hand without the mitten which he had removed to operate the range-finder was freezing. He moved it inside the opening of his fleece-lined coat. Then he lost consciousness.

The next time he recovered it was daylight. The light blinded him for a time so that he thought that something had happened to his vision. Then he saw that he was lying in some brush under a fir tree. The snow was packed up and around the brush. He felt satisfied with that. He ate some more snow and passed out again. It may not have been more than half an hour later, but Kostia afterwards swore that it was next day when he came to for the third time. He was sure of this because he thought it was earlier in the day than

the last time and the sun was not so blinding. It was utterly quiet. He could not hear the sound of guns. The battle had gone on and passed him. This time he tried to turn but he could not move his body. He did not know what had happened to his legs and this worried him. At last he was able to look down around his shoulder. His right foot was not there and the felt *vaelnki* was mashed in what had been the calf of his leg. He could not understand where his left leg lay. It was twisted so that it might have belonged to another. He thought about that, closing his eyes against the fever, thinking. "They are frozen. Good. There is no haemorrhage."

In moments of lucidity he thought how lucky he was. He had always had luck. In the Sixth People's Guards he had had luck. How he had had luck! That was a long time ago, six months ago, and he was still alive. Most Red Army men lasted only six weeks on this front. But it was true he had been re-mustered and that had been a break. And now he had got it in the feet. That was nothing. It was good to have a foot injury because they could not re-muster you again. He would go home to Anna and the children. He would take Lena and Sasha and Babka in his arms and there was tiny Annusha who had been born just before he left them. How they would welcome him! In moments of lucidity he thought of those who loved him.

Charlie Sommers and I lived in this annex or *pribavka* about a hundred yards down the street from the Legation. The house had been the property of a former nobleman, but more recently it had been occupied by an Italian trade mission. It was well appointed, adequately heated, with spare rooms for occasional guests, and an aged Russian servant to attend to everything. Charlie Sommers' *pribavka* parties were popular with certain of the junior diplomatic crowd. It was a tight little set, mostly Americans and British, barring only the newspaper colony at the Metropole Hotel, none of whom, Charlie said, could be trusted. What Charlie meant was that if you invited the newspaper crowd they were likely to steal the girls; and the newspapermen were a real threat because the stuffy, gloomy old hotel on Sverdlov Square where the newspapermen lived had for these girls the fascination of a nameless debauchery; in all Moscow it was the House of Sin, of unspecified wickedness, against which attraction the humble *pribavka,* however exclusive, could not compete. There was an emphasis on girls because, unlike any other diplomatic capital I have ever been in, there was no social life whatever in Moscow, outside that made by the foreigners among themselves; there was no meeting with Russians, either on the basis of social equals, or on the other hand, as prostitutes; and this condition applied up and down the scale, just as much to an Ambassador, his counsellors and secretaries, as to the humble clerk; in fact the clerk, rubbing shoulders with Russian domestic servants, had more opportunity for casual acquaintanceship. The exception to this condition was a number of young women, too young to have

any recollection of recent history, bold, and generally thoughtless, who sought out the foreigner because he was to them an exotic creature, because he offered them luxuries they had never seen, because association with him was interesting, exciting, dangerous. Few of the foreign diplomatic crowd who wished to avoid a life of hermitry had the facilities for entertaining these girls. The *pribavka,* lying apart from its parent Legation, and that Legation being a minor one, was a place exactly suited to the purpose.

Charlie Sommers was owner, occupant, manager and procurer at the *pribavka;* few people knew that I also lived there. Charlie Sommers arranged the parties, borrowed the vodka, stole the rations, begged the gramophone records, sought out the girls, slapped guests on the back, found transport for the drunk and, I presumed, hushed up scandals and smoothed down official complaints. I was glad his time was occupied with such labors.

This evening I was late. The party sounded already well advanced when I entered.

"Come in, old boy, Charlie shouted. "Vitalia's distracted. She thought you weren't coming."

Suddenly I was seized from behind by two strong hands and a voice cried:

"*Dorogoye* Zhimmsha!"

Everybody in the room laughed.

I unbent Vitalia's hands, smiling stiffly. Without looking at her I went to the other side of the room where Cantwell-Smith was sitting with Mia.

"Hello," I said. "I was coming over to see you, today."

"Sure, anytime," he said. He was still laughing. "Zhimmsha," he said, "she's got something there."

Joe Cantwell-Smith was an official of the State Department, one of the many secretaries at Spasso House: an eggshell complexion, long-coated Brooks Brothers tweeds, a loose athletic frame just beginning to settle firmly into a businessman's

fat. He had been pulled into the service because of the war and he was much liked, being without the precious formality of the career men.

Mia, his girl (for the night, anyway), was a tall dark creature, older than most of the young women who appeared at these parties and with a note of anxiety in her eyes, but pretty and free.

"Perhaps I can mention it now," I said. "You can probably tell me whom I should see at Spasso House."

"Sure, Jimmy."

At that moment there was an interruption from Vitalia who came over to us. She put her arm around my waist and with her body resting against mine gave me the Siren treatment.

"You have drink?"

"Why not?" I said. "I could do with a drink."

We went over to a table laid with small dishes and glasses. I poured two shots of vodka.

"To the *En-kay-vay-day,*" I said, "may their shadow never grow less."

Vitalia looked scared at the sound of the name and turned around to see if we had been overheard.

I couldn't have been less interested. As I put my glass down I saw Boris Gordon. He smiled and nodded. Gordon was the Third or Fourth Secretary at the British Embassy (I had forgotten which), and was much admired and imitated by Charlie Sommers. He was the son of a former Foreign Office attaché at St. Petersburg who had married a daughter of the Russian nobility, they said. Although impeccably English (Eton and Balliol, they said) there was enough of the Russian about Boris to suggest an agreeable volatility, a sharpness, fluency, and a fierce (British) nationalism; a man with whom one could never be confidential, although that went for everybody in the diplomatic set. He was thin, of medium height, with bright brown eyes and a hooked nose. He spoke Russian easily with a classic Petersburg accent. He liked to come to Charlie's

parties when they were exclusive. This evening he had paired off with Dynamia, a small bright-eyed girl with dark hair. He was talking volubly with Dynamia in Russian.

Dynamia and Vitalia regarded each other with expressions of complicity. They were both very young, both bold and confident.

Boris looked quickly from one to the other, noting the exchange of looks, then turned to me with a lightning-like appreciation.

"Magnificent, aren't they?" he said, smiling. "Where else in the world would one find such exquisite naïveté. When I think of all the time I've wasted on those dreary Germans and tired French. What do you say, Ferguson?"

"Such strong young bodies," I said.

"Ah, natural selection," Boris said, "centuries of peasant ancestry in those lumpy legs."

"I'll say they drink like *moujiks,*" Cantwell-Smith said. He was standing at the table pouring a drink for himself and Mia.

"They are quite likely to pass out suddenly without warning and lie on your hands like a sack," Boris said.

Vitalia, who was pouting and pulling a face as Boris talked, reached for the vodka bottle and poured two drinks.

"Vitalia, dear," Boris said, and broke into a rapid flow of Russian. He warned her against drinking too much. His language was an essay in the polite forms of another time.

Vitalia turned her back on him. Picking up her glass she pulled me by the arm until we were some steps away from the table.

"Not like him," she said. "Much capitalist." But her attitude would have been better expressed in stronger, more colloquial terms. She put down her glass. "Dance, eh?"

Charlie Sommers had put a record on the gramophone and the room was filling with dance music. Charlie took his new girl Julia and began to dance. I had an idea that while I was dancing with Vitalia I would be able to mention a certain little matter that was worrying me. But she was impervious to talk.

She was leaning hard against me, giving me the Siren treatment again, and sometimes, preoccupied with this role, she forgot the steps and trod on my toes. I thought I would end it.

"Peasant legs," I said.

This made her very angry. She dropped my arms and went away from me to the other side of the room where her friend Dynamia was standing. I went over to Cantwell-Smith.

"Before everybody gets mad with the vodka," I said, "I want to mention my little business."

"Shoot, Zhimmsha," he said, grinning.

"I want to ask you, Joe, what your people do about Americans who've taken out Soviet passports."

"Oh, those bastards," Joe said.

"There must be a number of them," I said.

"Thousands, as far as I can make out. It's one of the worries of the Old Man's life. He's afraid they'll all fall on his neck claiming protection if the worst happens. They'll want food, anyhow."

"What do you plan to do?"

"Hell, what can we do? Can you imagaine what some Congressmen would say if we started feeding Communists."

"But you're feeding Communists through Lend-Lease."

"That's different. They're Russians. These other guys are Communists who thought the United States wasn't good enough for them."

"They're not all Communists. What about their wives and children born in America?"

"If they've Soviet passports we can do nothing. What do you suppose Molotov would say if their citizens started to run out on them at this time and we started to collect them? As it is now, they won't let a Russian woman who marries one of our clerks leave the country with her husband."

"There've been a few cases," I said. "What about Freddie Schwartz?"

"That was special. If you can get an Ambassador to take the case up for you there is a chance. Anyhow Schwartz only got

out by the skin of his teeth. Do you know, Jimmy, there are about sixty British and American diplomatic and military personnel who've married Russian women and not one of them will ever get his wife out of this country."

"I know," I said, "I knew it was hopeless."

"I tell you they're afraid of their people going out. They're afraid they'll tell the world exactly how this country is run."

"Sure."

"I wouldn't even bother asking about it at the Embassy."

"Thanks," I said.

I was sitting in an armchair next to Cantwell-Smith. We had been talking while the gramophone played. Now the gramophone stopped and Charlie Sommers went to put on a new record. Vitalia came over and without warning sat heavily in my lap. I felt her hard little rump pressing into me and I felt my whole body reject her. She sensed my feeling and suddenly I saw the Vampire dissolve. She looked directly at me, her hazel eyes once more earnest.

"You not like me, Zhimmy?" she said.

"Where are those papers?" I said.

"Not like me?"

"You'd better put those papers back. You know it can be serious for you."

With her expression unchanged, with what might have been a reflective impulse, she began to search out my face with her fingertip. She moved her fingertip down the angle of my profile, touched out gently the shape of my mouth, my nostrils, my eyes, my eyebrows. Then with a little more acceleration bored into my ear.

"Stop it," I said.

Charlie Sommers, dancing by with Julia in his arms, looked down at us, grinning.

"I told you she's crazy about you," he said.

"Oh, Christ," I said, pushing Vitalia away, and standing up.

"Relax, old boy," Charlie cried, passing to the other side of the room.

"Let's have a drink," I said.

I took Vitalia over to the buffet and poured us a couple of good shots of vodka. Vitalia upended her glass without a quiver. I was beginning to feel I could drink the stuff without wincing.

Joe Cantwell-Smith and Mia were dancing. Charlie Sommers was slipping new records on the gramophone as soon as the previous one ended. Soon they would be satisfied merely to move the needle back to the outside edge. Mia and Joe were holding each other affectionately. Charlie and his new Julia were getting along fine.

"After all," I said, "it's a period of benevolence."

Boris Gordon, standing beside me helping himself to some *zakuski* which had been brought in, looked at me.

"An interesting remark," he said.

"I must be getting drunk," I said.

"A very interesting remark," Boris said, looking at me with sharp amusement in his bright brown eyes. "You have been improving your knowledge of the people with certain researches? Or am I mistaken?"

"I'm not sure what you mean," I said.

"I find them extremely interesting myself."

"Who?"

"Why, old boy, the Bolshies, of course. The survivors, at least."

"Are there so many?"

"Their families are still about."

"I am still confused about it," I said. "I thought the Purge may have accounted for a few thousand. I had no idea the number ran up to millions."

"My dear chap, you are rather innocent, you know. When did you arrive?"

"I came in January. What is that, seven, eight months ago."

"Just a babe in the wood."

"Why did they have to do it, Boris? Was it some kind of madness?"

"It's an old story. I suppose the truth is they didn't want to fight Germany any more than we did."

"I can understand that."

"Can you? I'm glad you do. You know there's a popular idea that we were urging Germany to attack them. Put an end to the Bolshevik menace and all that."

"I always believed it myself."

"You didn't agree with Munich. How strange?"

" 'Peace in our time,' my God."

"You shouldn't believe everything you read in the newspapers, old chap. It was important that Hitler & Co. should think that we had been deceived. The dear public is always the perfect decoy."

"You're going to tell me you wanted time to prepare."

"On the contrary, we provoked the whole thing at least six months, or maybe a year earlier than Hitler planned. It wasn't a bad idea, because nothing happened anyway until Hitler was ready. But it needed actual declarations and a state of war to shake the world into realizing what it was all about."

"Especially America."

"Especially America, old boy. If we had not declared war when we did, if we had gone on waiting until the middle of 1940 when Hitler was ready, not only America but our own people might still have been dithering."

"All this is expediency, Boris. None of it solves the problem."

"There is no set problem, old chap. History is flux, the old professor used to say. You know it never stops still for you to take a shot at it. We do not willingly follow policies of expediency. Expediency is forced upon us."

"The Bolsheviks had an idea about it."

"The Bolsheviks thought they could solve the German problem by fomenting a revolution and dominating it, but the Germans didn't respond. Old Daddy Lenin was always quite frank about the fact that he planned to import large numbers of German engineers and mechanics to carry out his electrification schemes and what-not. I think the Germans were justifiably a little suspicious about Russian influence in their Revolution. That was the death knell of bolshevism."

"Explain, Boris; explain, Professor."

"The Russians were forced into a policy of appeasement. Yes, old chap, they began their appeasement away back in 1930 when they began training the first Luftwaffe pilots here near Yelets. It was the Russians who explained to the Germans what an unjust thing the Versailles Treaty was. Under the Treaty of Versailles the Germans were not allowed an active air force, so the Russians trained one for them. Trained all their instructors. In return the Russians got some German engineers and mechanics."

"It's hard to believe."

"I say, old chap, let's talk about something else. There's a party on, you know."

"No, Boris, let's talk about this. It interests me."

"Anybody with half an eye saw what was happening in Germany just before the rise of Hitler. What do you think the Communist Party was doing? Why, they let Hitler take over without so much as a protest. Because the Russians no longer believed they could do it by revolution. They could see that communism had no future in Germany. They were going to come to terms with whatever else appeared. They had enough problems of their own. Their industrialization was a century overdue. Plenty to worry about."

"None of this explains the Purge which was where we began this conversation."

"They had to liquidate the Bolsheviks. You see the Bolsheviks really believed what they preached. But they repre-

sented only a minute fraction of Russia. Basic Russian policy was reasserting itself. That was why they had to liquidate them. The Bolshies were already getting troublesome about the pro-Hitler policy. Uncompromising fellows if you remember them. So the Kremlin got rid of them all. They never do things by halves in this country."

"So, you believe the pact of 1939 was genuine."

"It was the culmination of the policy of expediency which they had been forced into since Lenin's death. They would have carried it further and made a full military alliance with Hitler only the Germans wouldn't trust them. But they didn't do so badly. They divided up Poland and the Baltic countries."

"That deal was made then?"

"They were on such good terms. Why, old Ribbentrop brought a complete sound-recording of the Munich conference across and presented it to the Kremlin. They were delighted. They say you can hear dear old Chamberlain telling Hitler that if he attacks in the East he will have immunity in the West."

"The double double-cross."

"My dear chap. What do you think we are? Look at subsequent events. But the conspiratorial mind of the Kremlin is easily deceived."

"You believe they were taken in."

"Why they kissed old Ribbentrop and gave him the Order of Lenin. They began shipping food out of the Ukraine into Germany. They allowed German military engineers to visit all their plants in the Urals. After we declared war, they gave harbor space to German submarines in Leningrad and hid the *Bremen* up in Murmansk. You should have been here after they cut up Poland and the Baltic. You should have seen the loot they brought back! Why the old *En-kay-vay-day* has never been so well dressed. Where do you think they got all the stuff these girls are wearing? Take a look at the maker's name next time one of them takes off her dress for you."

"It seems incredible that they could have been deceived on

such a huge scale. They have such suspicious minds you'd have thought they'd have got wise to it."

"Suspicion is ignorance. A suspicious mind is the easiest to manipulate. You play on its prejudices."

"Such as—"

"Oh, they were so busy hating us. British subtlety, you know. They even jugged their own English language teachers. Right up to the day before the attack they refused to believe our warnings that the Germans were mobilizing against them. Look at the record. Those Tass communiqués. Their forward outpost in Poland probably *saw* the Germans moving, but dared not report it. If they had been fifty per cent alerted they would not have suffered such a terrible defeat."

"Not final defeat."

"The winters saved them. The mud in Poland and the heavy snow here. The Germans were overconfident."

"Now they will win."

"The Germans are already realizing it. You watch them as they retreat over Russian soil. They will destroy and devastate everything that they pass over. They will try to weaken this country for a generation at least."

"Then what."

"It won't help them. Russia will do by conquest what they failed to do by revolution in 1921. They'll occupy and dominate Germany. And it'll be a good thing. They'll put all those damned Nazis in the Communist Party and subject them to *En-kay-vay-day* discipline. All those machine-minded blighters will be together."

"I've heard something of the kind conjectured," I said.

"You've been talking to some Old Bolsheviks, I see."

"Yes."

"Ah, it's an old story, this Europe. Been going on for centuries. The Bolsheviks were an interlude."

"A pause en route."

"En route where?"

I laughed. "You've got me there."

"I say, why do you fellows meddle with it? You have a nice little country out there. Why don't you stick to it and leave Europe to rot?"

"Well, we're all in it."

"Writing a little report on morale, perhaps?"

"No," I said, "morale is Charlie's department."

"How amusing. But if you should be writing anything yourself take my advice and don't pay too much attention to them. The old Bolshy survivors, I mean. That was the mistake the Germans made."

Vitalia left me as soon as I got into conversation with Boris. For some reason or other she detested him. She was dancing with Dynamia, after the fashion of Russian girls. She took the male side of the partnership. As I watched she tripped. I thought she looked a little drunk. Joe Cantwell-Smith and Mia were sitting together in an armchair. Joe was kissing Mia on the neck. Mia looked a little embarrassed and kept glancing in our direction. Charlie Sommers and Julia were still dancing. Charlie was laughing happily.

"As a matter of fact," Boris said, helping himself once more to the *zakuski,* "our friend Charlie is in an excellent position to report on morale."

"He has contacts," I said.

"Don't underestimate them. Despite their appalling manners these children are of far greater interest than our dear friends the old Bolshies."

"In what way?"

"They're bored."

"Bored!"

"Exactly old chap. Do you realize these are Komsomols, junior Communists, old chap, and they're bored. Have you considered the political significance of a Bored Komsomol?"

"Let's have another drink."

"You understand, this is the stuff out of which the Party is made. These are the Elect, the twelve million from whom the ruling class is drawn. If the Germans, a couple of years

ago, had paid less attention to what their old friends the Bolshies were saying, and more attention to the Komsomols of that time, they might have anticipated the present situation. It is not the Bolshy survivors of 1937 who are turning the tide *for* the Germans, but the Komsomols of 1937, now Red Army men and women, who are turning it *against* them."

"But you say they're bored."

"Ah, that is this lot, the 1941-42 Komsomols, who will be turning the tide for or against *us* in a few years."

"Here's to boredom," I said, raising my glass.

"You know about it, of course. They take these young things at the critical age of thirteen or thereabouts and they indoctrinate them with all that Marx-Engels-Lenin-Party-Proletariat stuff, turning them into fanatics. But you know, I rather think there are fewer and fewer fanatics. You see, they get bored, devastatingly bored, with all that stuff and in a very short time they are looking around for something else."

"Why should they get bored today if they weren't bored a few years ago?"

"Their masters are bored with the stuff, too. It's a case of like master, like pupil. It's dry-as-dust stuff all that Marx-Lenin business. Besides nobody believes in it any longer. It's become like a catechism, something you have to know by heart, but nothing that has to do with reality."

"What is your conclusion?"

"The next generation will become human."

I helped myself to another drink and drifted away from Boris. Damned clever, I was thinking. One of these clever Catholics of whom there are so many in the Foreign Office. But heterosexual, that was where he departed from type, and that was something. I was watching him as he went to Dynamia. The Americans, like Joe Cantwell-Smith, have the power to do things, but these English are damned clever. Too damned clever; a cleverness which is almost vapid cynicism; puncture their concealed nationalism and what would

they be? And what does he base his treatise on? A few girls at a party. And what girls! Damned spying little bitches. Thieves, too. What's he think I do? Write reports about everything? How quick they are to sneer at Marx. How they still hate these old Bolsheviks. They really love these new Russians. They understand them, that's why. They understand nationalism. They can deal with it.

I realized I was getting pretty drunk. I wanted to get drunk and so now I was drunk. But being drunk couldn't keep away that dry gutless gripless seedless fathomless meaningless despair.

The party had reached some sort of climax. It was the vodka, of course. That was how it was, suddenly it took you, like that.

I saw Vitalia had taken the floor and was dancing a Russian dance.

She was very gay and it was an amusing dance. Her strong little legs carried her rapidly around the room. Everybody was watching her. Charlie began clapping his hands to the rhythm of the dance and this was taken up by Smith and the other girls.

"Your little Vitalia is bored, too." Boris Gordon said. He was standing beside me watching the dance. His bright brown eyes were regarding Vitalia sharply.

"But she won't last," he said.

"Last what?" I said.

"For one thing, she is too young, and then she is a bold young woman. Quite a strong little character in her own way."

"Despite her appalling manners," I said.

"It all goes together," Boris said. He laughed. "Do you know I think I can forecast that young lady's future almost to a day. Of course, as soon as Charlie picked her up she was interviewed and some *En-kay-vay-day* chappie at the Lubianka gave her a long talk about being a "Soviet Woman" and watching these foreign enemies of the Fatherland. Romantic

and exciting for a young girl. Espionage! Especially when they gave her an order on the Lubianka shop for shoes and stockings and a frock or two. But soon they will put more pressure on her; they will ask her about this one and that one; their concupiscent conspiratorial minds will want to know precisely how it is done; and then she will show resentment and prevaricate a little. Suddenly she will realize that there is a whole battalion of people reporting her own movements. Then she will begin to lie and lie; and because she is too young to understand what it is all about, and because she is tough anyhow, she will begin to treat them contemptuously. And that, of course, will be the end."

"You think they would shoot her?"

"Dear me, no, that isn't the form. You said yourself this is the period of benevolence."

"So I did."

"They will send her away to some collective farm on the Volga and there she will spin out her days working in the fields, ploughing, cultivating, working from morning until night, re-forming the partly lost habits of her renounced peasantry; greed for money and small possessions, brutality with animals, personal filth; but there will be compensations, a man as often as one comes by, sleeping on a stove in winter, and in the spring sitting in the sunshine gossiping with the other women as they pick the lice out of each other's hair. A good life: there is sound sense in most everything the Russians do."

"No wonder she doesn't like you, Boris."

"You say she doesn't like me! Jimmy, I'm staggered!"

"Better have another drink," I said.

Vitalia was still dancing, but now she was swaying and capering about the floor. Cantwell-Smith and Charlie Sommers were shouting with laughter at her antics. Mia and Julia were sitting close to them. They were giggling and looking at each other. Only Dynamia was serious eyed, watching her friend with some disapproval.

"Vitalia! *Hooliganka!*" she said angrily.

I began to think again how shoddy the whole thing was. The dry aching emptiness was clutching at my belly again. I was thinking how trivial, how meaningless, how little dignity was to be found in the world. It was a feeling which always emerged from the vodka bottle at some stage. I was thinking this when Vitalia collapsed in the middle of the floor.

Dynamia was at her side, but Vitalia was thrusting her away, staggering to her feet, her hair fallen over her face, her dress awry. She stood in the middle of the floor laughing in a silly way. Then her face blanched and she tried to walk to the door. Dynamia was at her side helping her.

"Poor little dear's ill," Charlie said. He was helping Dynamia with the staggering girl. Everybody else was still laughing.

"If there is one thing I positively can't stand," Boris said, "it is a young woman being sick."

"Put her in the *shtrafnaya rota,*" I said.

"What's that?" Boris said. "What's that . . ."

Charlie put his head around the door.

"I say, Boris, do be a good chap and put on another record. Can't let a little thing like this ruin the party," he said and withdrew.

As Boris clattered the records about, Joe Cantwell-Smith came over to get a drink.

"Say," he said, "what a town this would be if it were wide open!"

"Wide open, yes, that's it," I said.

"Say, don't these Russians love to drink and dance. Think of the cabarets and the night spots there would be."

"And the whorehouses," I said. "Did you know, Joe, that there were thirty thousand whores in Moscow before the Revolution?"

"No kiddin'. But never mind about the whores. Just give me a concession in shoes, that's all I'd want. Or canned goods. I'd take a concession in canned goods all right."

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"You think they'll have the NEP back, eh?"

"They'll have to do something. They've lost all their light industry, such as it was. They haven't a stitch of consumer goods except what we give them."

"If they ever get into Germany," I said, "they'll fix that."

"They will never get into Germany," Joe said. "You don't think we're going to let 'em, do you?"

I was getting tired of the conversation. I could see no point in talking any more. It wouldn't be a pleasure to abuse these bastards. This blank senseless thing was creeping back.

"I say, let's see if we can tune in the late news from the BBC," Boris said.

That was the last thing. There was nothing else.

". . . Marshal Timoshenko . . ." the radio squawked.

Jesus, what did they know about it? Those poor blind bastards chalking signs on tanks that were no good anyhow. Timoshenko, my God, nobody had heard of Timoshenko for six months. What were they doing over there!

Charlie Sommers came back with Dynamia.

"She's lying down in one of the spare rooms," he said. "Just a touch too much of the old poison, you know."

He turned the radio off and put another record on the gramophone.

My God, wouldn't they ever stop this nonsense! Why don't they take their women to bed now.

"Have another drink, Ferguson."

"That's what I want."

"Where did you hear about the *shtrafnaya rota?*"

"What is the *shtrafnaya rota?*"

"Don't you know? They're punishment companies. Literally Fine companies. They were a Czarist institution. The Soviets reintroduced them last July after the debacle at Novorossiisk. They put various kinds of offenders in them and send them into the toughest sectors of the line."

"Machine guns in front of them, machine guns behind them, into the valley of death."

"That's it. At Balaclava, too. Poor devils."

"Do they put drunks in the *shtrafnaya rota?*"

"Drunks and deserters, people who are late for work, malingerers, and some of your old Bolshy types, too."

"Are there any left?"

"Listen old man if you have anything on the *shtrafnaya* thing I would be much obliged. I've got to write a little bit about them. Oh dear, we seem to be blabbing a good deal tonight. What about coming down to my shop, tomorrow. Let's talk it over. I can see you're . . ."

"Drunk."

"Well, old man, I didn't say it."

"Never mind, I am drunk. And I know I'm drunk. What's more I want to be drunk . . ."

They were talking about all kinds of things.

It was a long time and the dancing was going on and on. Then I asked myself: Why am I here? It was as simple as that.

I went out of the room. I felt I was pretty drunk, but not badly drunk, no I could manage the stairs all right, not badly drunk, but drunk enough to sleep, and tomorrow I would have it all over again, tomorrow morning, but that would be another thing. . . .

I opened the door to my room. The light switch was somewhere there, but it didn't matter about the light. But I was not so drunk that I couldn't undress myself. It was bad when you couldn't undress yourself. I took off my clothes. There were my socks, but why bend all that way down for socks? But all the rest were on the floor in a heap. Now . . .

I went to my bed.

A strong young hand gripped me by the wrist.

"*Dorogoye* Zhimmsha."

Sure, I knew all the time.

KOSTIA

It was almost a year since Anna had heard from Kostia. There had been no letter, no message, no official intelligence, nothing to say whether he was alive or dead. Anna was a sturdy, phlegmatic woman, but there was always at the back of her mind this constant worry. Sometimes she tried hard to believe he was dead, sometimes she hoped he was dead, because that would be final; but it was all in doubt. This day she stamped out her thousandth carburetor casing and the secretary of the Party Committee put a little red flag on her bench, signifying she was among those who had exceeded their *norm* by one hundred per cent. Anna was an ideal worker, a deep-chested, broad-hipped Soviet woman, strong armed, unflagging. The secretary of the Party Committee wanted her to be an example to all other workers so that the factory could realize its demanded production of carburetors. Anna Petrovna worked eleven hours every day and once a month there was a day's rest. She earned five hundred rubles a month. She was never late for her work because for every hour she might miss in that way she would be fined a week's pay. She had worked hard to exceed her *norm* because the reward for exceeding the *norm* was an extra midday meal at the *stolovaya* which other workers did not get. Anna was able to wrap up the barley meal or *kasha* in a piece of *Pravda* to take home to the children. This evening with her packet of *kasha* held firmly in her hand she walked through the blackout to the Metro and struggled through the crowd to her home. Her home was the basement room in a house on a street between the Kropotkin gate and the Arbats. When Anna arrived home her mother was tending a

fire in a small iron stove. A faulty stove pipe led out through a sunken window and there was smoke in the room. Anna scolded her mother. Her mother was fifty-five years old, but she was already wizened and bent and her hair was white and her fingernails long and grey. The tiny twelve-months-old Annusha lay in her cot wrapped tightly like a very small Egyptian mummy with only the small face showing, soundless, tearless. Anna looked at her infant, looked for any sign of illness or freezing, but did not kiss her. Babka, Anna's second youngest child, who was three years old, went up to her mother and began tugging at her mother's skirt. Anna bent down and lifted Babka into her arms and gave her the breast. In the old days it was a precaution against pregnancy, but nowadays it was hunger. Pregnancy, thought Anna grimly to herself, that is one thing which will never bother me again. The older children, Lena and Sasha, were playing with other children in the street. They were playing the *propusk* game. The two children would lie in wait for the others, then they would appear suddenly and shout, *"propusk, propusk," or, "documenti, documenti,"* screaming for the papers or credentials of the others. Or they would play the *Nemtsy* game and they would chalk iron crosses and epaulettes on the jackets of one of the younger children and they would begin to chase him. There was another game they played: they would stand in line, pretending they formed a queue, then with the gifted mimicry of children, they would imitate the arguments and quarrels and complaints of their elders. Anna thought most of the games were nonsense, but they kept the children warm. She called to Lena and Sasha from the doorway and then she went back to help her mother prepare the evening meal.

They all lived together in this room and, except for the rations, they were happy. Kostia had been a good worker and when he was home there had been always plenty of food. But now Kostia was away and there was never enough food. Tonight there was black bread and some herring for supper. Anna's mother had spent all day in a queue and there was

milk. The children ate ravenously. Lena was the eldest. She was ten. Sasha was eight. They had been born in the good days. Anna could remember laughing because everybody seemed pregnant then. Everywhere in Moscow there were pregnant women then.

Suddenly Sasha said: "Mama, why don't we have butter?"

"Hold your tongue," Lena said. "Do you not know that butter is two thousand rubles a kilogram?"

"Well," Sasha said, "why don't we have potatoes?"

Anna's mother answered: "Because they are more than one hundred rubles a kilo."

"Son of a bitch," Sasha said.

Anna said: "Where did you hear that? You must not say that, Sasha."

Sasha said something much worse. He was like his father, Anna thought. In a few years he would want money to go to the theaters and the *Kino*. He would go after the girls, just as Kostia had done. Oh, yes, Anna knew. He would bring all his troubles home. Then he would get married and bring his wife home and they would all live together in the room. No, perhaps he would go to live with his wife's family.

Lena said: "Mama, I saw something today. It was at the breadshop. Mama, there was a man there who was wrapping up his bread and there was a woman there who took a piece of his bread and put it in her mouth. She was so quick, just like that. And she didn't run away, she just stared at the man, chewing all the time with the bread sticking out of her mouth. Then the man got angry and snatched the bread from her mouth and put it back in his parcel. But Mama, the bread was hardly there before the woman had snatched it away again and put it in her mouth. All the time she was looking at him and didn't go away. The man got very angry and he hit her and took his parcel and went away swearing."

Lena paused for breath.

"What were you doing in the breadshop?" her mother asked.

"There are always people there," Lena said.

"Begging!" her mother said.

"They say that tomorrow there will be noodles or macaroni," Anna's mother said, "then we can have soup."

Anna began to reckon the month's expenditures. It was something never far out of her mind. There were her own five hundred rubles and sixty for each child. The sixty rubles for each child was because Kostia was in the Red Army, apart from this there was nothing from him, because every Soviet woman must work for her living. Anna ate at the factory *stolovaya* or cafeteria, and that was that much saved, although they took many of her ration coupons. But her shoes. There were no shoes. . . . Kostia, she said to herself, what am I to do for shoes? Kostia, send me some shoes. She remembered the beautiful shoes he had brought her three years ago. She had never had shoes like them, but today they were worn out and there was nothing to mend them with. A new pair of shoes on the black market cost four thousand rubles and if you were caught buying them you were sent to Siberia. To have a pair of shoes mended would cost three or four bottles of vodka.

At nine o'clock, the house superintendent came in and Anna and her mother went out into the street and began to sweep and shovel the snow away from the sidewalks. Lena came out and helped them. There were other neighbors working. The woman who made the toy animals was there. She had given Babka a toy made like an elephant. Anna thought she might sell the toy on the market. They worked for an hour and then they came in. Although it was cold in the room Anna slept as though she were dead.

Kostia had not written to Anna because everybody had said it was no use writing, the letters never arrived. Then when he was in the hospital he had failed to write for another reason.

In the hospital Kostia told everybody that he had lain in the snow for three days before they picked him up; but that was not true. They had found him on the evening of the next day. The Russian guns had finally dispersed the Fascist battery and a regiment advancing on the left flank had caused the

enemy to withdraw. There were moments of consciousness in the interval between being picked up and carried to the base hospital which Kostia could not piece together afterward. There was delirium and pain beyond compass and a smell, a stench of rottenness which penetrated to his stomach, which was there and then not there, which was the odor of gangrene, though he did not know it. His first clear memory was the awakening after the anaesthetic and the feeling of nausea and emptiness. It was not until some time later that he found that they had taken both his legs off just below the trunk. When they were able to prop him up in bed it was queer to see the bedclothes lying flat across the bed, halfway down the bed. The surgeons and the nurses were overworked and had no time to answer his questions.

A few weeks after the operation, they had moved him to another hospital. This hospital had been, formerly, a schoolhouse and the rooms were small. A girl scrubbed the floor and walls and left a harsh smell of antiseptic behind. Kostia was in a room with three other men. They were all leg cases. They became very friendly and had a plan for smuggling *mahorka* into the hospital, although smoking was forbidden. They talked about things which Kostia had never heard talked about before. Now that they had been wounded they had the feeling of men who had seen the worst that life could offer. They talked about the war.

"Why have we suffered such overwhelming defeats?" Kostia asked.

"Do you remember," Alexi, who was in the next bed, said, "we were going to fight all our battles on the enemy's soil."

"And now we are fighting on the Volga," Kostia said.

"The country is full of traitors," Victor said. He was a tall gaunt-cheeked man lying in the bed farthest from Kostia.

"But the traitors were all liquidated in 1937," Kostia said.

"There are big and little traitors," Victor said. "We omitted to liquidate the big traitors."

"In 1937," Alexi said, "they killed only those whom the

Germans wanted out of the way. I have heard it from a very high Party member."

"It is not the traitors," Gregori, who lay still in the corner bed, with a fragmented wound caused by two explosive bullets from a *Finski* autogun, said. "It is the Jews."

"That is Hitlerism," Kostia said.

"Nevertheless the country is in the hands of the Jews. The Jews are the bureaucracy. We have nothing but bureaucracy. What we need is a strong Russian army to put the Jews where they belong."

"It is not the Jews, it is the Generals," Victor said. "Clearly the conduct of the war is the responsibility of the Generals."

"I had a General," Kostia said, "who did not know north from south."

"Many generals are without education," Gregori said.

"I myself have had seven classes," Kostia said.

"Many without education were shot by Commissars," Victor said.

"Our General was a fool,'" Alexi said.

"There are only two things a General should know," Victor said. "He should know where the enemy is. And he should know where he himself is. That is all any soldier asks. It is sufficient."

"He should also know how to get his soldiers a bath," Kostia said.

"And bread," Victor added.

They laughed then. This was how they talked day after day. The thaw came and the nurse opened the window, although it was against rules, and there were fresh breezes bearing the perfume of fir trees and burgeoning birch. Occasionally each of the men would be taken out of the room for an operation and when he came back there would be the sickly smell of anaesthetic.

Gregori had the most operations. Each time they would take out another saucerful of fragments and stitch him up again. Every time he came back Gregori said he had less

hair. He said that the ether made his hair fall out. But since they all had their heads cropped no one noticed Gregori.

"Nevertheless," Gregori said, "I shall be able to walk."

"To be wounded in the leg is perhaps the best thing," Victor said. "Always I hoped to be wounded in the leg. And now it has happened and I have no leg below the knee."

"But Kostia is by far the worst case," Alexi said. "He has no legs at all. At least I have one."

They made an indecent joke about Kostia's leg.

"I remember we had a man with no legs in our village," Gregori said. "He had a board with little wheels under it and he pushed himself along by wooden handles. In winter he had runners instead of wheels and he was very clever on the ice. He was always getting drunk and falling down cellars. He amused us all with his antics."

"What work did he do?" Kostia said.

"He lived with his mother. In our village every man must have legs to work."

"He could do nothing?"

" 'He who does not work, neither shall he eat.' It is the twelfth article of our new Constitution," Victor said.

"His mother fed him," Gregori said.

They all wrote letters except Kostia. He began one letter: "My Annusha, only half of me is here, but I am alive." Then he tore it up. He could not bring himself to tell Anna. But he talked about Anna and Lena, Sasha, Babka and little Annusha and when Victor left the hospital he said he would go to see Anna and it was he who told them.

Anna was working when Victor called at the basement room. He told Anna's mother and then he went away because he saw that they did not have enough food to make an extra one at supper. When Anna came home the old woman told her.

"I thought you were about to tell me he was dead," Anna said.

"No," the old woman said, "they have taken his legs away. All his legs."

"That is worse," Anna said.

"It would be better for him to be dead," the old woman said. She began to weep. "Kostia without legs! Kostia on a tray!" she cried.

Anna did not weep. Suddenly she saw in her mind's eye the *Tass* poster, which had been displayed all over Moscow, showing the comfortable German family, the door flung open and the stare-eyed half-a-man on the threshold—the legless German soldier home from the Russian front.

"You would think from their propaganda that *we* never suffered," Anna said.

"Stop!" the old woman said, "there is no Kostia, but remember the children."

"No there is no Kostia," Anna said, "but there are the children. All these years there will be the children."

Anna was not able to weep.

At the hospital, Gregori followed Victor and Alexi also moved out. Kostia was moved to another room where the patients were too ill to talk. Kostia began to worry about never leaving the hospital. He was now so thin that the nurse could lift all of his half-body and carry him like an infant.

"When I am discharged," Kostia said to one of the men in the ward, "I shall receive a pension of a hundred rubles a month."

"Calm yourself," the man said, "it will be worth nothing. It will not buy a kilogram of potatoes on the market."

"Then I shall go home and live with my wife. And I shall nurse little Annusha and prepare the meals while my wife goes to the factory."

"Make sure that your wife will take you back," the man said.

"It is better than if I had been wounded in the face," Kostia said.

"No," said the man, "it is not better. Because then you could work."

In the end, Kostia wrote to Anna and told her that he had lost his legs and would soon be out of the hospital. He did not say that he was now so thin.

The letter, following immediately upon Victor's visit, was a shock to Anna, even though she already knew. She began to think desperately. She thought of Lena and Sasha and little Annusha and she thought of her mother who was useful and bargained at the markets and waited in queues. Then she stopped thinking. She did not think any more. She said nothing of it even to the children, although her mother, who had seen the letter, wept to herself. One night Anna borrowed a pencil and piece of paper from the house superintendent.

She wrote: "Darling Kostia, It is terrible what has happened to you. But I am happy that you are alive. Kostia, darling, you must not come home. We have not enough to eat. Always the children are hungry. You who are their father will understand. For the love of the children, Kostia you must not come home to take the bread from their mouths. All day mothers stand in queues and walk to the markets. Kostia, the children must come first. My darling husband, I know that you will understand. . . ."

In the absence of the political director, the superintendent of the hospital opened the letter and then destroyed it. The soldier Kostia Barov, both of whose legs had been amputated and who had suffered frostbite and exposure, had died. They were not sure why he had died, because the operation had been a success from a surgical point of view.

FERGUSON

There was no light; but it was morning. The first thing was infinite small terror, the absence of memory, the question: where am I? What blacked-out capital? Then immediately the sense of the still, warm body beside me. Who is it? And then everything coming back with an overwhelming tide of yellow-tasting vodka, the smell of stale *mahawka* and the slow cranial agony that would be a hangover with remorse.

I leaned out and put the bedside light on.

Vitalia was asleep. Her blonded hair lay over the pillow. Her face, in untroubled repose, was startlingly young. She seemed not to be breathing and for a moment I had the illusion she was dead..

As I lay on my side, looking at her, she opened her eyes. They opened without fluttering and with undimmed sight and they looked straight at me. I saw the recognition slowly come into them. They were bright hazel eyes of great beauty.

I leaned over and kissed her. Her expression did not change.

We went on looking at each other for several moments. Then I cupped my hand beneath her breast and moved it firmly down her body, feeling under my palm the exquisite warmth, the hard contours of her diaphragm, the tightly ridged abdomen, the gentle rising of the mons veneris and the shelving away of the thigh.

Suddenly she knocked my hand away. It was a sharp stinging blow.

I looked at her. There was anger, indignation and challenge in her expression.

The heat of the vodka was still in my blood, exciting me I put my knee between her legs, thrusting her thighs apart. She did not resist, but accepted me. Yet as I brought my lips close to hers she turned her head away.

There was no avoidance in her body.

Afterward, being clear in mind, with the hangover only somewhere in the back of my skull, I said:

"You bounce too much."

"Bounce? What is bounce?"

"Never mind," I said. "Have a cigarette."

"Zhimmy! A camel!"

"You are very young, aren't you?"

"Next year, *semnadtse.*"

"Seventeen."

"How old you Zhimmy?"

"Twenty-seven," I said.

She looked long and seriously at me. "You have many womans, Zhimmy," she said, at last.

"Not many," I said.

"What kind womans?"

"Some British, some American girls."

"You have many *prostitutka?*"

"No."

"You never have *prostitutka?*"

"No," I lied.

"Many *prostitutka* capitalist countries?"

"Yes."

"I would like be *prostitutka.*"

"You're going the right way."

"You think I love Charlie. I not love Charlie."

"I wasn't thinking Charlie."

She looked at me. "I like you," she said. Suddenly she put out her hand and touched my cheek, "*Zoloty,*" she said, very softly. There was an expression of melting tenderness in

her eyes of a kind that comes only into the eyes of Russians. It embarrassed me.

"Listen," I said, "I want those papers."

"What papers?" Swiftly the tenderness was replaced by an expression of hard indifference, which is also a Russian characteristic.

"The papers you took off my desk," I said.

"No take paper, Zhimmy," she said. She looked at me with an expression of childlike innocence.

"Well," I said, "I don't know. It couldn't be Madame Udanova or the old servant." I turned to Vitalia again. "Listen," I said, "are you sure you didn't take it. A document like this. In an envelope."

"No, Zhimmy."

"I wonder who could have taken it," I said. "Lizavetta will be distracted."

"Lizavetta, huh!"

"Nobody you know."

"Lizavetta is secret girl?"

"No," I said. "Lizavetta is old enough to be your mother."

"Is crazy paper."

"So, you took it after all."

"Is crazy document. No love in it."

"You thought it was a love letter?"

Vitalia nodded.

"Where is it now? You didn't take it to the Lubianka, did you?"

She looked at me, estimating my mood, looking at me with cool appraisal. Then she smiled. She was smiling at my annoyance, at my concern, at my stupidity.

"My God," I said, "I'll have you in the *shtrafnaya rota* for this."

Vitalia burst out laughing. I laughed too. I wasn't sure about its being a joke, but now it was a joke.

"Zhimmy you are funny man!"

"Now, see here Vitalia . . ."

"*Shtrafnaya rota* is for men. Women go Tashkent for dig canals."

"How do you know?" I said.

She looked at me knowingly.

"Now, listen, Vitalia, where is the document?"

"Is crazy document."

"You've said that before. Why do you say it's crazy?"

"Is about *tarakan.*"

"What is *tarakan?*"

There was a dictionary beside the bed. I reached for it.

"Cockroach!" I said. "That sounds crazy enough. Are you sure?"

Vitalia nodded. She moved two fingers like legs quickly along the edge of the counterpane. Then she pretended to stroke two long stiff whiskers sticking up into the air.

"*Where* is this document?" I said.

Vitalia looked innocent. "There," she said, pointing to my table.

I got out of bed and went to my desk. There was the document in its envelope. I picked it up and brought it back to the bed.

Vitalia was squealing with laughter, stuffing the sheet into her mouth as she laughed.

"What's the matter?" I said. I tried to look dignified.

"Look! *Chulock!*"

Sure enough I was still wearing my socks. I got back into bed quickly. A man feels a certain self-consciousness in such circumstances. Sitting in bed I undid the envelope and took out the contents. There was a large manuscript, written in longhand Russian on very poor quality paper. Attached to the back of the manuscript there was a dog-eared book, about quarto size and not many pages.

Vitalia seized the book from my hand.

"Ah," she said, excitedly, "See, it is *tarakan.*"

The title of the book was *Tarakanishche!* It appeared to be a volume of child's fairy tales by one Chukovsky. The front

page showed a drawing of a cockroach with very long whiskers and cruel black eyes standing arrogantly upright while a lion and a tiger and an elephant hid meekly in the distance.

Vitalia was delighted with the volume.

There was a picture on every page. Drawings of excellent craftsmanship in pen and ink accompanied by verses in Russian.

Vitalia began chanting the verses to me in singsong Russian, stopping at every verse to shout with laughter and delight, bouncing up and down on the bed-springs like a child.

"Tell me, what's it about," I said.

"Poor Zhimmy, no understand Russian, eh?"

"Explain," I said. "Russian rhyme is too much for me."

"See," she said, immediately serious, with the solemn air of a mother talking to a child. "See, here is cockroach, you say 'cockroach,' yes? Here are all animals of world, lions tigers, you see, these and these," she pointed to alligators, ostriches and other animals, all drawn by the Russian artist with a unique human personification. "All is happy and beautiful in world. Then here is cockroach. He comes. He is *Khozin!*" I looked at the pictures of the cockroach strutting before the astonished animals. At first the expressions were of amazement, then they changed to dismay, and then to fear. "*Khozin* cockroach tell lions do this, then lions do this, tells tigers, tells these and these. Tells them eat one another. Tells them all things. Makes them bow down in front him *Khozin.*"

Vitalia began reciting the verses in Russian. Then the verses amused her so much that she began laughing at them and her childish delight in the volume returned. She clasped the thin dog-eared book, printed probably a score of years before she was born, to her bosom. I realized that there was not much fantasy in the lives of the post-Revolutionary children. Fairy tales had been regarded with suspicion as some form of bourgeois propaganda. Their childhood,

ended almost before it began, had very little in it to satisfy the native genius for imaginative invention.

While she was laughing over the verse and drawings in the book I took up the manuscript. It was the synopsis for a film based on the book.

"My God," I said, "a natural for Disney."

The title of the film play was the same as that of the fairy tale, *Tarakanishche!* and the subtitle acknowledged it as a film adaptation of the story by Chukovsky. Karl's name did not appear.

I glanced through the pages. They were written in pencil and the handwriting was stiff and awkward. My Russian was not good enough to read it rapidly and fluently without the aid of a dictionary. But I could see that Karl had improvised a good deal on the original. In addition to subduing the lions and the tigers and the crocodiles the *Tarakan* made them confess their errors, made them confess their ideological differences, sardonically enjoyed their embarrassment, banished them and killed them. In the film play, there were a lot more smaller cockroaches in the background, living underground in labyrinthine cellars, and only able to come into the light because their Boss gave them protection. There was a development in the film which I doubted was in the volume in Vitalia's hands. The *Tarakan Khozin* became so inflated with his power that he contemplated other worlds besides the animal world. It seemed that he had a fear of being trodden underfoot by heavy human boots and because of this plotted and planned to extend his dominance so that it included the human world too.

I was impatient with my Russian. There were passages and phrases I could not understand. There were humorous verses and comic scenes. Big lions eating humble pie in an extraordinarily humble way, and so on. I could see that it was a rich document.

"It would certainly make a wonderful Disney," I said.

"It has that quality of terror which Disney displays. Long is more profound than Disney. There is a bitter irony hht Beneath the humor something so hard and bitter . . . Go why can't I read Russian!"

"Sto? Sto?" Vitalia said. She was absorbed in the volume again. She was repeating the verses again and again, laughing at little verities in the drawings, caricature that was irresistibly funny.

"Let us see how it ends," I said.

Together we turned over the pages of the story, Vitalia pointing once again at the discomfiture of the animals, laughing at the strutting, black-eyed cockroach, the *Khozin* or Boss, as she called him, his big whiskers flashing in the face of some huge terrorstricken creature, the little sinister Boss of the world. At the last page she put the volume down on the counterpane, flattened the pages with her hand, and said:

"There."

In the second-last picture in the volume the artist showed the fate of the *Tarakan.*

A sparrow, hopping down from a tree, not noticing the Tarakan's fierce aspect, quickly gobbled him up.

The last picture showed all the animals of the world gamboling about the landscape, all happy once more.

Vitalia sighed.

"Horosho," she said, *"Ochen horosho."* She said it with an expression of grave and grateful content.

"It *is* good," I said, "so is the film synopsis."

Vitalia glanced at the manuscript in my hand, her eyes dismissing it, her hand stroking Chukovsky's thin dog-eared volume.

Suddenly she changed her pose. She looked at me eagerly.

"Vitalia hungry!" she said.

"All right," I said.

"Now."

"Here," I said. "Here is a cake of soap. Take a bath while the water is still hot."

She smelt the soap deliciously, as though it were chocolate. Then she scampered off to the bathroom and soon I heard her making the noises appropriate to the young savage she was.

I put on my dressing gown and lit a cigarette.

I put Karl's manuscript and the volume of verse and drawings back in the envelope. I had a new feeling of respect for this Karl. I felt that I should like to meet him. At the same time I had a feeling of suppressed excitement.

I wondered if he were the sparrow.

ANNA

That night Anna went to church. She had never been to church before. The woman who made the toy animals told her about the church one night when they were sweeping the snow off the sidewalk. This woman who lived in the same apartment house and who talked like one of the former people said that she should burn a candle for Kostia. She said that thousands of women who had lost their husbands and their sons in the war now went to church. She said it made them much happier and easier of mind and that was what the church was for. Anna had never been inside a church, not even when they were museums and the former priests distributed antireligious propaganda, and now she was curious. The truth was, Anna did not know what she wanted or what she was doing. All day she was silent and at night she said nothing except to scold her mother or the children. She might have wept, but she was not a weeping

woman; she might have talked, but she was not a talking woman; she might have prayed, but she did not know how to pray. Never in her life had she prayed. She remembered that in her childhood her mother had possessed an ikon which she had kept hidden. As a child, Anna had looked for and found this ikon, but the curious tablet had meant nothing to her. It had been fun to play with other children at the wicked-feeling game of crossing oneself, but the action had had no significance for her. There had been no place for the Church in her happy youth and in her womanhood she and Kostia had had too much together to bother with such practices even if they had been fashionable. They had always danced together, worked, loved, borne children, and there had been no need of prayer. But now she had to do something. Her heart sometimes seemed as though it would burst.

Her grief, her heart-burning, affected her work. The little red flag which had been put above her press to indicate that she had doubled her *norm* was no longer there. Her production had fallen. There were many mis-stampings from her press. The bin of waste metal beside her press grew full. The secretary of the committee was displeased. He stood over her and talked to her in a loud voice about the Socialist competitions. Other women, working at other presses and cutters, glanced stealthily at Anna. They did not talk to her. Because her production was down, Anna no longer received the extra meal at midday and was therefore not able to take home the little extra *kasha*. Alone, eating her thin soup and munching her black bread in the factory *stolovaya*, Anna became aware that there was a special *stolovaya*, partitioned off from the workers' eating room, for the factory director and the secretary of the Party committee and others from the department of cadres and the commissariat. It had always been there, it was not a secret place, but this day Anna noticed it. She heard the secretary of the Party committee laughing. She knew, as everybody in the factory knew, that in the special *stolovaya* there was a num-

ber two diet, that is, there was herring and red caviar and sauerkraut and often pickled cucumbers and tea. There was nothing unusual about this. It was called the preservation of the cadres, which meant the policy of sustaining, before all else, the sinews of government. Anna had never questioned the policy of the preservation of the cadres, it was something far above her, not even for her to think about. But this day suddenly she began thinking about it and her overburdened heart began to grow heavy with anger. It was a slow rising anger and soon it would take control of her whole being and that would be disaster.

That was why she went to church this night (she did not know it was Sunday) with Lizavetta. The aspect of the church startled her dulled exterior senses. She had never seen anything like it before. There were hundreds and hundreds of people there, so many that they could not all get inside the church and many stood in the cold outside. They jostled and pushed Anna and Lizavetta this way and that so that Anna had to exert all her strength and this was good for her. Then she looked at the church. It was a big church with a lofty ceiling decorated in blue and gold and very pretty. Then she saw all the ikons. She knew they were ikons because she remembered the ikon her mother had kept hidden. But these were bigger. They looked very rich and strange with pictures in gold and little figures modeled within the carved frames. Anna looked at all this and wondered. Then she saw the priest. He had a big black beard and large black eyes. He was wearing a beautiful hat embroidered in gold with pearls and other precious stones. The jewels glittered in the light. His stiff satin robes were also embroidered in gold. The priest had a wide cavernous mouth which he held open as he chanted the service. Many people had little candles in their hands and others passed five-ruble notes forward over the heads of the people in front of them and candles were passed back. Soon there were hundreds of candles alight. It made a very pretty scene.

The little yellow flames lit up the faces of the people, pale haggard faces of women, some bowed in prayer, some lost in reverie, some weeping, all momentarily at peace. The yellow flames flickered in the draught and the tallow guttered, but the thin work-worn hands held the candles firmly and steadily. The priests chanted and at the name of the deity the older women would cross themselves.

Lizavetta found a corner where she could kneel and she remained on her knees praying for a few minutes. Then she rose and smiled at Anna. Anna was not sure what to do. She wanted do something which would put her mind at peace, the peace she recognized in the faces of these other women, but she did not know how to do it. While she was standing there Lizavetta placed a candle in her hand. Anna looked at the candle, thin like a pencil, the little yellow flame flickering, the tallow guttering in the night air, and she did not understand. She heard the priest chanting and she saw Lizavetta smiling, beckoning to her to kneel. Anna knelt, but she did not lower her head. She distinguished the word "God" in the priest's monotonous chant, because it was then that the older women crossed themselves. It was the first time she had heard the word "God" in that way. As she knelt there she began to feel at unease with everything about her. She felt that there was some monstrous lie being enacted there, a cheating, an obscenity vaster than her comprehension. She looked about her and she saw all the other women there, the hundreds of women, wives and mothers of the dead, all kneeling, burning little candles, muttering to themselves. That is what she saw and what she saw was real to Anna. She was suddenly full of shame at the indignity, the humiliation, the fraud; and the shame became rage, the earlier deep burning, overwhelming anger, filling her heart and overpowering her senses.

Anna rose to her feet. The candle fell to the ground, its feeble flame extinguished. Anna turned and walked away. She pushed through the crowd of worshipers and then she came to the double line of beggars. They were like the beggars

who stood outside the breadshops, or in the Sadovy boulevard, except that these were shabbier, and mute. They stood there at the approach to the church, their palms outstretched, black claws protruding from the folds of their wretched garments, dumbly suppliant. Some of them were soldiers in ragged Red Army uniforms. One among them was without legs.

Anna stopped short when she saw him. His trunk rested on a small tray of wood with little wheels like roller skates. He wore an old Red Army forage cap and his head was hung down. He too had a hand outstretched before him. As she stood there, momentarily petrified, he glanced up at her. His eyes and cheeks were sunken, he was unshaven, but his face was still young. His glance caught her horrified stare and he dropped his head again.

Anna ran all the way home. But she did not weep.

FERGUSON

She ran in through the doorway of my room bringing a breath of sharp cold air. She was radiant. There were little stars of snow on her hair and shoulders and her eyes were shining and happy. I was suddenly warmly in love with her: that is, I was glad to have her there, I couldn't take my eyes off her, I watched the flow and movement of her body under her frock with enlightenment. I felt suddenly that Moscow, after all, was tolerable; the loneliness (and there never was a more lonely capital) had abated; I felt this because I had been thinking about her all day. Well, it was not serious and it would be happy while it lasted.

If it had been another place and another time, I would have brought her an orchid, a cypripedium to match her hazel eyes, and we would have huddled together in a taxi, holding hands, as we were driven to the crowded brilliant theater entrance. As it was, we stumbled through the blackout and had difficulty in finding the theater. There was the usual fuss about getting our coats and overshoes checked. We had just missed the curtain and the old tyrant at the door refused to let us in until I began talking to her in English and she saw that I was a foreigner. Then she let us squeeze past, but she was furious with some Russians who tried to follow us. We found our seats without difficulty; they were in the fourth row among the other foreign reservations. The Russians take their theater with immense fervor and Vitalia was enjoying every minute of it: she was also enjoying the role of grand and mysterious lady in the company of a foreigner.

The opera was *Boris Godunov,* one of the more lavish productions, designed for the Bolshoi Theatre but now crowded into the Filial, or affiliate, Theatre. London and New York shows would seem a little dim beside it for the Moscow producers are unrestricted by money or the number and quality of the performers, and they make use of the most elaborate and beautiful costumes: beautiful furs, velvets, satins, all of which are real and not makeshift or stage properties; the furs are Russian sables, the damask is from China, the silks from Japan, the wools from Kashmir or Kazbeck. It adds a new flavor to the show: it is not something thrown together for a limited season to catch a few public pennies; this is a show for kings and potentates. Vitalia responded with enthusiasm. It might have been a major experience in her life. Everything the actors did, every note sung by the singers, met with her full and uncritical adulation. If you have ever accompanied a young person to his, or her, first circus or pantomime you will know how it was with Vitalia; you will understand that the quality of wonder is something to behold and you will remember how all the starry-eyed love communicated itself to you in a sublime and

yet humbling way. They have such a capacity for life, these Russians, so much of the child's tremulous appreciation of simple things, so little sophistication that there is a small shame in one's own heart for being what one is.

After the first act we went to the foyer and joined the parade of couples which in every Russian theater walks round and round, always in a counter-clockwise direction, as though playing some nursery game. There were all kinds of people in the parade; bureaucrats mostly, plump complacent-looking officials with their wives and daughters; but there were also many soldiers, colonels, majors, all wearing their side arms, wooden-holstered Mausers or the black-holstered Russian regulation pistols, worn almost at the small of the back. There were several big bosomy Red Army women carrying the tiny "suicide" pistols in their broad belts. There was a staff general without side arms, but with a chest covered with enamel orders, looking very handsome in his red-striped pants, black boots and well-cut tunic. There were some younger soldiers, junior officers in campaign-worn uniforms, appearing very stern and straight backed and trying not to look out of place or too full of wonderment; I saw that they wore the small gold stars which meant that they were Heroes of the Soviet Union which explained how they came to be there. Some young girls who were parading arm in arm were eyeing the Heroes and giggling. In the center of the foyer there was the usual group of foreigners. Joe Cantwell-Smith was among them. He grinned at me. There were a couple of newspaper correspondents there, one of whom I knew had known Vitalia before Charlie Sommers brought her to the *pribavka*. The journalist grinned at Vitalia and gave me a sharp glance. I felt suddenly alien. There was more than friendliness in those grins. I noticed that Vitalia ignored them and this made me more embarrassed as though the grins had been a sign of complicity, I glanced at Vitalia and for the passage of a second her glamour had gone. I saw myself walking arm in arm with the little Russian Komsomolka, the *Sharleona*, the sixteen-year-old amateur spy. I saw her not very

well dressed, inelegant, unbeautiful, brazen. And then it was gone. But it left behind, that fleeting impression, a feeling of distance between Vitalia and myself. And then I was angry, very angry with myself for having been embarrassed by that corruption of grins.

The end-of-intermission bells began ringing and Vitalia took my hand and hurried me inside the theater; she was not going to miss one instant of the show. As the curtain went up she was tense with expectation: what new marvel was about to be disclosed! A cold breath of air, smelling mustily of old canvas, drifted out over the audience from the unheated rear of the stage, bringing a chill of reality for me, but in no way disturbing Vitalia's pleasure: the lighting, the scenery, the costumes and the actors absorbed her whole attention. Again, watching her, I was humbly moved. It made me love her very much, in that comradely way, and I forgot the moment of dis-illusion and embarrassment in the foyer. Moreover, against my inclination, I was becoming interested in this *Boris*.

The opportunity which the opera gives to male voices, especially bass voices, is probably why it is seldom heard to advantage outside Russia. But there is more to the hearing of *Boris Godunov* in Moscow than the quality of the singing. The atmosphere of murder and conspiracy in the Kremlin, the intrigues with foreign Powers, the haunting conscience of the Czar, his confessions of guilt, the loyal Russian priests and the threat of Catholic influence, the plotting pro-Polish boyars, the restless peasantry, the dumb hungry masses hating the middle classes, the bureaucracy, coming between them and their beloved Czar: all of this might have been Russia of the early seventeenth century, but it was also disarmingly parallel with the contemporary situation. I was a little shocked. Surely it was also visible to the audience? Of course, I thought, they would understand it in their elliptical Russian way: it was Art, misery was glorified, power justified and God, not Man, was the arbiter of Destiny; yet, even the Czars had hestitated to let Mussorgsky do this for them. Then I saw it all more clearly in

the final act, the so-called revolutionary scene, of which I had heard, where a mob of peasants humiliates and beats to death a boyar; this I saw, was the logic of the opera so far as its modern backers were concerned. By some subtle emphasis in the staging (or was it in the audience) the scene had an intensity of power; here released was the pent-up fury of the peasantry directed with an excess of brutality against one who was intriguing with a foreign country. This was the pay-off. This coldly passionate murder, now being enacted before us, would be the fate of every small collaborator in every small village in the vast area of Russia that would soon be recovered from the enemy. But active collaboration was one thing; at the present moment in Russia an ideological deviation, the slightest disagreement with, or restlessness under, authority was as dire a crime and would be treated as such. When I understood this, that the opera, like so many of their plays, was contrived as a threat and a directive, an ever-present threat to all who stood between the *Khozin* and the masses, and a directive canalizing impending mob fury, a cold wave of sickness crossed my brain. I turned my head away. Then, suddenly, out of all this stage business, and dominating the opera, came this song of the idiot. The village fool, sitting there with a saucepan on his head, began this song which has no words and no meaning, but is pure sound, a faultless tenor voice above all those bass and baritone voices. It seemed to me at that moment that it was the most piteous song I had ever heard, the expression of all that is unspoken, confined, imprisoned and hopeless in Russian life, the ultimate despair. I looked at Vitalia and she looked at me and we both of us understood. That moment of understanding was our bond. It was the first time in all the months I had been in Moscow that I had found a companion who responded as I responded to an unstatable, untranslatable feeling. I had broken through the armor of loneliness and futility. There was the last scene with its great assemblage of people, five or six hundred people on that stage, it seemed, with the Kremlin realistically in the background, as though it had been

moved from across the square, and the cacophony of bells, the rich costumes, this was the climactic message: the everlasting firmness, the unshakability of the Kremlin, of Russia. Well, I thought, with some relief, it is not for nothing that the whole Russian theater is a department of the N.K.V.D.: but, when they bring it that close to your own life, it is really Theater, and how pale our own stage seems when measured against it. When the curtain had rung down, Vitalia rose to her feet, clapping her hands and making the shrill boo-ing noise which is one of the approved ways of showing appreciation. After the curtain had been raised and lowered half a dozen times in acknowledgment of the applause, Vitalia ran down to the orchestra barrier and with a hundred other young people began shouting and applauding for the principals who made their appearance through the folds of the curtain, bowing low, and then retiring. At last, regretfully, as though all the light had gone out of the world, Vitalia came back to me; but it was only a momentary regret, for her eyes brightened with pleasure when she saw me; she took my arm, looking at me with gratitude, as though I personally had vouchsafed these wonders.

The delay for the curtain appearances left us behind in the scramble for coats and hats. Everyone, even the plump bureaucrats, reflected something of the excitement of the performance. We put our hats and coats on and we trod into our overshoes with some regret that the fantasy had ended and now the reality of cold unheated apartments began. Not for all, of course, because many, like ourselves, would go to fine warm living quarters, such as they provide for the commissars and diplomats. I left a tip with the old woman at the cloakroom and soon we were hurrying through the streets on our way home. It was pleasant to come back to a warm room. We put our hands on the warm white tiles of the stove. There was not much food, but it was good. First I opened a bottle of vodka and we tossed off a couple of fingers against the cold. There was a samovar ready and I lit a Tommy cooker under

it so that it would soon begin to bubble and we would have tea. There was bread and butter and fresh black caviar and a couple of boiled eggs and an onion. Vitalia was scolding me for not having something to eat immediately we drank the vodka, as is the custom, so I cut some bread and spread it with caviar. The egg I then spread over the caviar. I diced the onion and used this, too, as a spread on the caviar. All this food I had from the special shop for diplomats which treated us on the same basis as their own *Narkomindel* officials. The water was boiling and in a few minutes I had made tea. We had a couple more vodkas and then we drank tea with sugar.

I began to tell Vitalia about myself. I knew that it was silly to talk about myself and that she would not know what it was all about, but I yielded to that familiar-enough impulse and began talking about myself. It had been a pleasant evening and I felt that the reserves were breaking down and I could talk to someone without seeming too self-important; and, of course, woman is always man's audience. I told Vitalia where I had been born, drawing a little map for her, because she had never heard of the place. I told her what it was like out there and she looked a little incredulous. But she was in a mood quite different from that which she had displayed when we went through the copy of *Life* together; all the resistances were gone now, I thought; she nestled against my side and listened with an expression of awe. I told her about my mother and father, what kind of people they were, how my father had been an ordinary worker, but now had a farm, but just the same it was a struggle. I said that my father believed the only solution to the farming problem was collectives or coöperatives and I explained how sympathetic he was to the Soviet Union.

I was full of the sentiment of reminiscence and I stopped my narrative and bent over and kissed her.

"Tell me about your folks, Vitalia," I said.

She gave me a glance full of mockery.

"You want informations, eh?"

It was like a sudden blow.

"You make report, eh?"

"No."

I supposed it was true. I thought to myself that, of course, I had led up to this point in order to hear her own story. I wanted to hear about her life. And she had called my bluff. No, that was not true.

"Zhimmy angry?"

"No."

She was laughing. I felt suddenly alone once more. My God, how near I had come to making a complete fool of myself. Charlie was right, the hormones were on their side. What a peculiar glandular animal man is!

"Why not tell me about your people," I said. "Is it a secret?"

"All dead."

"Both parents?"

"No father. No mother."

"Any brothers or sisters?"

She shrugged her shoulders. It seemed final enough.

"Zhimmy," she said, "give me *Tarakanishche.*"

"No."

She began pouting. She took my hand and began playing with my fingers. No, I thought, this is where you have to be hard. This is how they deceive you. Beneath all this softness and baby-talk the little bitches are as hard as flint."

"Why do you want *Tarakanishche?*"

"I like *Tarakanishche.*"

"You think it funny?"

"Pretty, like tonight."

"No," I said. "It doesn't belong to me anyway."

"Zhimmy," she said, "tell me more."

"More about what?"

"You have girl at home, eh?"

"I had a girl," I said.

"Yes. What her name, Zhimmy? Tell me about her."

"Her name was Georgina. I guess you would say we were

engaged. Anyhow we were going to America for the honeymoon."

"Honeymooney? What is honeymooney?"

"Honeymoon," I said, "not honeymooney. Oh hell, I can't explain. It's when . . ."

She was laughing at me.

"I believe you know," I said.

"Zhimmy give Vitalia *Tarakanishche.*"

"It's out of the question."

"If you want, I give you much informations."

"No. Don't you understand? I'm not a spy."

"Bad spy."

"I'm not even a bad spy. If my country asked me to do that kind of work I would refuse. Do you understand?"

"You funny man, Zhimmy. All foreigners spies."

"Oh, I give up."

I poured out some more vodka. It was warm in the room. Or was it what I had drunk?

"In all the time I've been in Russia," I said, "I've met only two or three people who've treated me in an adult way. Everybody else either expects me to tell them lies, or else they expect me to believe their lies."

"You have Russian friends?"

"Yes," I said, "and you're crazy if you think I'm going to tell you their names or where they live."

"You give them food, huh?"

"A little. Not much."

"So. What they give you?"

"Nothing. Absolutely nothing."

"They want you for something. Too much dangerous for nothing. You careful, Zhimmy."

She spoke with a queer urgency. She could not have guessed anything.

"You worry about yourself," I said.

"You like Russians?"

"Yes."

"You have secret girl, yes?"

"No. No. Nothing like that with my friends."

"I believe."

"Listen, Vitalia . . ."

"Zhimmsha, I love you."

She was just a little cockeyed and she had the warm sensual look of wanting to be loved.

"You give me *Tarakanishche.*"

"Oh, hell," I said. I looked over at the envelope on the table. I weighed up the chances of it ever seeing the light of day outside Russia.

"No," I said, "I can't let you have it."

"Zhimmsha."

"All you would do, would be to turn it over to the *En-kay-vay-day.*"

At the name N.K.V.D. she opened her eyes wide, but not so that she appeared startled.

"En-kay-vay-day podonky," she said.

"Certainly."

Suddenly she looked at me, her eyes fully open, full of remembered anger.

"En-kay-vay-day want know everything," she said. "They ask about *us.* They want know if I make baby. How much if I know I make baby, eh? How!"

"They asked you that!" I was startled.

"Bah, *En-kay-vay-day. . . .*" I did not recognize the words she uttered, but they had the intent of obscenity.

"When was this?"

"Nichevo. Zhimmsha I love you. Much love."

She had her hard little hands grasped around me and all her young body was shearing itself against mine, that marvelous young body with its innocence and voluptuousness and passion, there, urging itself upon me.

"Much love you, Zhimmsha," she said. "You marry me eh? We go America. Big Honeymooney, eh?"

"Now listen, Vitalia . . ."

But all I heard was her mocking laughter and I was not sure how much irony there was in her laughter. And then I forgot to think about that for she began, without haste, to take her clothes off. With quiet self-possession she laid her precious clothes out on the chair, then she rubbed her little belly with her hands, laughed at my fascinated stare, and ran to the bed.

I did not lay my clothes out carefully on a chair.

Some time afterward, in all the warmth and ecstasy, she spoke to me.

"Zhimmsha, give me *Tarakanishche.*"

"Oh, sure," I said, "maybe."

KOPCHICK

Comrade Kopchick was writing a report. He had been working on the report for several hours. Once during this time People's Commissar Malov had called him on the telephone to say that the report was urgently awaited. Kopchick was now writing at a furious pace, his nose almost touching the paper as he wrote. He was very short sighted and he wore pince-nez with thick rimless lenses. When anyone looked at him directly (which was difficult) it was like looking at the big end of a pair of binoculars and seeing two vastly diminished human eyes somewhere beneath all that glass; but when one looked at him from the side and glimpsed behind his pince-nez one saw that his eyes were quite large and protuberant, pinkish, constantly darting behind the glass like caged white mice.

The effort of concentration caused Kopchick's mouth to remain partly open. His hair, which usually stood upright off his forehead in a sharp cowlick, was now falling forward. In the course of each passing minute a large drop of moisture would form on the end of his thin bony nose and hang there, like a high diver poised on his springboard, until, at the very moment of departure, a cosmic sniff would draw it up, with lightning-like speed, back into the dubious shelter of the Kopchick antrum.

Nothing could stop him now: he was covering sheet after sheet with his small viperish script. The telephone call and People's Commissar Malov's cold voice had started a small terror in Kopchick's mind; but some impulse drove him to continue furiously writing. He had never done this before. He had never written such a thing. It had been his rule never to act (no matter how desperately urgent or pressing the demand was), never to pass on supplications or complaints to his superiors, never to put forward a plan or a proposal, never to promise anything, never to agree or disagree, never to make a decision, in short never to do anything without a written authority or a specific verbal order from his superior: furthermore, never to deviate from the written or verbal instruction, never to interpret an order, but to carry it out to the letter, to do exactly what he was told to do and nothing more; and though this made him much disliked, even made him enemies among his subordinates and the officials of rival commissariats, this pleased him so much that he made a habit of provoking dislike, being always rude to inferiors, because he knew dislike was the proof of his loyalty, left him free from the suspicion of complicity in plots or conspiracies, and thus commended him to those that mattered. This rule of conduct, coupled with his capacity for work, his tireless attention to minute detail, his nightlong burrowings into records, reports, indices, files and dossiers had brought him high in the service. But on this occasion something had happened, some impulse had overcome his usual caution and he was letting himself go. Of

course, there was some fundamental sense to it: if the line of action he recommended found favor then he would include himself among the high advisors of People's Commissar Malov, somewhere approaching the status of Comrade Mitkin, and this would be a very high promotion, indeed, bringing him close to the Kremlin. But there were many risks attached to recommending a line of action and Comrade Kopchick was in a highly nervous state about the whole thing, especially since People's Commissar Malov had personally called him on the telephone. While Kopchick had considered the report merely a routine matter, the telephone call indicated that there was an unusual degree of urgency surrounding it, which meant only one thing, and this alarmed Comrade Kopchick who had been writing with the thought in his mind that there would be time for revision and reconsideration and perhaps, finally, he might abandon his idea as the more cautious thing to do, and to submit instead a purely formal report along the approved lines. But now he was caught in the act, so to speak, and this filled him with apprehension. Yet, he could not give up his project.

The problem concerned the malleability of the child mind. It was a problem about which Comrade Kopchick was peculiarly sensitive. The impulse to make observations on this problem had proved irresistible. Comrade Kopchick had two children, one of whom was an idiot, a supersensitive half-wit, of a type not uncommon in Russia, who, had Kopchick been more humbly employed, might have entertained some remote village with its prankish howlings. Perhaps it was because of his child that Kopchick believed he had special insight into the indiscipline of the child mind and its susceptibility to alien influences. On a previous occasion Comrade Kopchick's preoccupation with child psychology had led him to act overzealously and for a moment it had seemed disastrous; but so far from damaging him it had, in the end, proved advantageous, bringing him to the notice of the right people who had found him a place in Moscow. Perhaps his present impulse

would end as happily! Comrade Kopchick was not certain; the cold voice of People's Commissar Malov had not encouraged him. But the problem had become an obsession and Comrade Kopchick could no longer detach himself from it.

He had analysed the problem from every angle. He had noted how certain ideas, maliciously implanted in the child mind, could spread like an epidemic. He produced a number of cases from the files to prove his point. He indicated how much store foreign religious organizations placed on influencing the mind and imagination of children. He quoted the Jesuit proverb. He touched on the great wisdom of Soviet leadership in dispensing with coeducation and returning to the program of proper domestic studies for girls and masculine military studies for boys. But the aspect of the problem he had most to say about (and this was the core of his report) was the question of foreign animals in the lives of Soviet children. Toys made in the likeness of foreign animals were reported to be popular with Soviet children, especially the children of peasants. This tendency had been thoroughly reported on. The whole problem of non-Soviet animals was related to the problem of foreign propaganda. The representation of foreign animals could create a demand to know more about those animals and the countries which they inhabited: this could lead, naturally, to a desire to visit these lands and this, in turn, to a feeling that the happy life in the Soviet Union which they owed to their Leader and Teacher was inadequate. The romanticism latent in the child mind was something which had to be disciplined in infancy, otherwise the work of the *Pioneers,* when they came of age for membership of that organization, could be seriously complicated. Thus the representation of non-Soviet animals as toys, or in imagery, or even in talk, should be suppressed. There were numerous excellent Soviet animals to take the place of the lion and the tiger and the elephant and the kangaroo. Why not encourage the representation of the bear and the reindeer? Representation of the polar bear and the camel would be excellent propa-

ganda for the immense achievements of the Soviet Union in the Arctic and the Eastern regions, while representation of the pig and the ox would prepare the infant mind for the *kolkhoz*. There was the problem of the Moscow Zoo which required separate consideration. The zoo was not popular owing to the prejudice of the kindhearted Soviet people against the imprisonment of animals. It might be worth while considering limiting zoo visitors to children from the special gymnasiums. Another aspect of the problem of animal representation was the sinister use of animals in heraldry, for centuries the symbol of reactionary feudalism. Even in present times, the feudalist symbolism was incorporated in the signs adopted as trade marks and brands by capitalist organizations. The lion, for example, had become the symbol of imperialism while the use of eagles (Comrade Kopchik paused a minute on the problem of eagles and then erased it from his report: one never knew when the Double Eagle might not again fly over the Kremlin). In capitalist countries the representation of animals had given rise to innumerable stories and legends about animals, all of them of an imperialist nature and related to the conquest of colonial countries. Such animals as the elephant and the tiger and the kangaroo were in this category and symbolized the oppression of subject peoples which was objectionable to Soviet children. The imperialist writer Kipling was the foremost exponent of this form of propaganda. Capitalist imperialism, however, was not satisfied with natural animals, but had invented their own animals, such as the unicorn and the dragon: if children learned to want lions and tigers, then why not unicorns and dragons? The appearance of unicorns and dragons would be a triumph for foreign propaganda.

Comrade Kopchick had written many pages in this strain and none knows but that there would have been more if the telephone had not rung again. Kopchick clung to the receiver: the cold furious voice of People's Commissar Malov filled him with terror.

"Yes, yes, at once . . ."

But People's Commissar Malov had already hung up. He did not need Comrade Kopchick's assurance he would report himself at once.

Comrade Kopchick ran to the office of People's Commissar Malov. He was out of breath and there was sweat on his pale forehead when he tiptoed into the long room where People's Commissar Malov sat at the head of a narrow polished table set for a committee meeting. Kopchick stood poised a yard or two inside the room. His mouth was smiling, and then unsmiling, and when it was unsmiling it was abject: his head and shoulders kept nodding stiffly forward in little involuntary bows, jerking back before the movement could be called an obeisance. His short-sighted eyes could just discern the corpulent black-jacketed figure of the People's Commissar at the far end of the table, but could not discern his mood or his intention.

People's Commissar Malov raised a heavy arm. At that signal Kopchick raced forward, continuing to make little involuntary noddings, smilings and unsmilings. People's Commissar Malov was a fat man, covering his corpulency with a black Russian-style tunic; he was without decorations or insignia, but with a broad black belt around his middle and high black boots. He had a round cherubic face pitted with acne. Although babyish it was not a youthful face; it was a face you sometimes see among daring paranoids; except that People's Commissar Malov had a natural expression of complacency which was neither persecuted nor fugitive and a cunning and a callousness beyond adolescence. What terrified Kopchick were People's Commissar Malov's eyes, small and black in their casements of pudgy flesh, and utterly ruthless, detached from emotion and indifferent to thought. Every time those eyes came to rest on Kopchick he trembled and his head began to nod and his hands gripped hard together in front of his chest. Now Kopchick thrust his precious report into the fat fist held out toward him, feeling as he did so, that he had signed his life away. All is lost, cried Kopchick's soul, all is

lost. A vision of an incompleted canal in Kazbekstan crossed his mind.

Comrade People's Commissar Malov looked at the manuscript and there was an evident surprise when he saw that it was written in longhand instead of being typewritten. He slowly looked up at Kopchick and then lowered his eyes again to the manuscript. He read the first page through. Then he thumbed through the rest and glanced at the thin book of verse and drawings attached as an appendix. He raised his eyes again—those black ruthless eyes—and looked at Kopchick as though he were some extraordinary variation of the species. He looked at Kopchick for several seconds before he spoke. Then he spoke softly.

"What is this?"

The quietness of his voice signified a terrible fate for Kopchick who performed gyrations of nodding and hand-washing.

"What is this?"

People's Commissar Malov repeated his question. His fat fist gripped the sheet of paper so that the report writhed and twisted as though it was Kopchick's own tortured soul.

"What do you think you're doing! Are you having a game with me? Is it that you are making a joke of me, Mister Kopchick?"

"No, no, no," was all Kopchick could gasp. Malov's employment of the formal term of address was a note of doom.

"Then what is this?"

The mis-timed report, now crushed out of shape, fluttered to the table.

"Why do you give me this, when what I want to know is who he is conspiring with?"

"Conspiracy . . ." Kopchick stuttered.

"Yes, A foreign conspiracy, Mister Kopchick."

"I did not know . . . that is you did not say there was a conspiracy . . . I thought . . ."

People's Commissar Malov looked at Kopchick. Kopchick heard his own sentence ringing in his ears like a death knell.

For one second he had forgotten that it was not his place to defend himself. It was his place to listen and to admit his mistake. To defend himself was, somehow, to nominate himself as an accomplice in this crime. He could see the suspicion already entering the mind of People's Commissar Malov.

"You do not know! Have I to tell you, Mister Kopchick, that it is our business to know *everything* the foreigners are doing?"

"Yes, yes . . ."

"Perhaps you do not understand, Mister Kopchick. Perhaps you think that when I call for a report on this foreigner it is a routine matter. Perhaps you do not understand exactly what is meant by the information that this foreigner is engaged in a conspiracy with certain Russians living in Moscow. Perhaps you think this is something casual I have learned in the ordinary way, Mister Kopchick. Is that what you think, Mister Kopchick?"

When he talked of the source of his information, People's Commissar Malov's cherubic face was distorted in a grimace of animalistic ferocity.

"No, no, I was wrong," was all Kopchick could gasp. He was abject, his head was thrust forward, his mouth was open, his eyes were popping.

People's Commissar Malov did not look at Kopchick, but half turned away from him.

"Comrade Kopchick," he mused. He said the name reflectively with that detachment from human emotion which put terror into Kopchick's heart. "'Kopchick,' 'Kopchick.' Where did we get him from? Who was it brought him in?" Then his voice took on a new malignity. "Perhaps you were here in Comrade Yzhov's time?" he said.

"No, no," Kopchick gasped. "I come from Chelyabinsk."

People's Commissar Malov looked again at Kopchick, the bright black eyes noting the involuntary movements, the fleck of white foam at the corner of Kopchick's mouth. Then he said slowly:

"So, we have nothing about this. We know nothing, all this has happened under our eyes, and we know nothing about it. I am told, by the highest authority, that this foreigner is engaged in conspiracy, and I know nothing about it. All I have is this, this . . ."

People's Commissar Malov tapped the crushed and beaten manuscript and its slender appendix, with a fat forefinger.

"Perhaps you feel you would like a change of duty, Mister Kopchick," he said gently. "A little service at the front, eh?"

Kopchick nodded, wrung his hands, was unable to say anything.

"You are getting too lazy down there. Too little to do. And what is all this about animals? What do we care about animals!"

"The foreigner . . ."

"Ah, they are all the same, these petit-bourgeois foreigners. Did you not know that they love dogs?"

Malov smiled cherubically.

"Find out what elements he has made contact with. I must know tonight."

The sight of Kopchick almost running out of his office gave People's Commissar Malov a warm feeling. There was much confidence in Kopchick: he felt that Kopchick could be relied upon.

He felt satisfied at having exaggerated the incident. It was not an important incident, but it was something he had not been able to account for immediately, he had understood it as a test, and he had felt uneasy in the light of the sardonic and wolfish smile with which the information had been given him. Of course, it was Scherbiakov. Only he was in such good favor that he would dare. So, Scherbiakov was already conducting his own pipeline from his *Sovinformburo!* Or perhaps it was Dekanozov at the *Narkomindel?* Or the *Narkoborony?* The Army was everything now. Well, he would see. It would be seen who was more true, more loyal, more humble, more obedient to the sacred Fatherland.

For a moment People's Commissar Malov transferred his feeling of animosity to the letter box at the north gate of the Kremlin. It could have been one of those anonymous letter writers. Then, quickly, instantly, he dismissed the feeling.

He picked up Kopchick's report and looked through its crushed pages. He looked slowly through them. There were some acceptable ideas in the report. Scherbiakov had a paper he called *The Crocodile,* didn't he?

He picked up the slim volume of verse and drawings attached as an appendix to Kopchick's report. He debated for a moment. Would *He* be amused? He looked through the pages, looked at the drawings, at the animals which had inspired Kopchick, at the cockroach, at the sparrow. He saw that it was a book published in the former times. It made no impression on his mind.

He put the book aside for filing.

After all, *He* might *not* be amused. Sometimes he was not amused and then he had a way of looking at you. But some of Kopchick's ideas might be useful.

FERGUSON

I met Mitka in the Volkhonka near the old Beaux Arts building. We walked along past the Lenin Public Library. I had a prejudice against the library and its pretentious modern entablature because I had once tried to go there and had been thrown out; nor had I been able to get written permission from any quarter to visit the place; I supposed it was because a large portion of the four million books were now forbidden

literature. I asked Mitka why no one ever seemed to go near the place.

"All books gone," he said. He shrugged his shoulders. "Son of a bitch."

He began telling me a story about a man he knew who was a professor who had kept all the forbidden literature, all the old Party rules and Party programs, before they were amended, all the old Party Congress reports, all the Party newspapers before 1938 that were now illegal, all the forbidden authors like Barbil and scores of others; the old professor, it seemed, had zealously kept all these and was now fashioning them into a time capsule which he would bury deep in the ground for future generations to discover. I guessed that the story was apocryphal, but popular, like most of Mitka's stories. I did not believe that all the books had gone; they had probably been removed on account of the bombing. I thought of this when I saw the old bomb-scarred University building. We had crossed the Vozdizhenka where I had been picked up—when was it? four or five nights previously—and we had walked along the Mokhovaya, passing the old Czarist *manège,* and now we were in front of the University where the fragments of Herzen's statue still lay about. They had covered the scarred façade of the University building with three huge portraits. They were the usual portraits: a beaver, a goatee, and a pair of handle bars.

Mitka said we should take the Metro, so we crossed over by the Moskva Hotel at the Square of the Revolution. Looking up toward Red Square I saw masses of red bunting flying from the Arcades. Then I remembered that we were close to the eve of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Revolution which they celebrated, according to the new calendar, on November 7. Then as we came within sight of Sverdlov Square I saw they had put up a whole gallery of portraits, each portrait almost the size of a house. They were all there: the old ones, of course, the old silver rats, but also the new ones, the young ones, Zhdanov, Malenkov, Scherbiakov, Voznessensky, Kruschov

and the fat evil Malov whose face, for no reason that I knew of, because I had never met him, or had any dealings with him, I detested. They all looked tough, these young ones. They *were* tough. In all the world there were none tougher, not even the Germans, because the Germans were clinical, and these Russians were naturally and effortlessly tough, therefore without aberration, and, because of that, usually logical. We often talked about them. Cantwell-Smith said that when the Boss died these young ones would stage the biggest knock-down drag-out fight in history; certainly they were all suspicious of one another now—that was common knowledge—each commissariat a power unto itself, and that was probably how the Boss made the system work; but one could not be sure of such prophecies; the mystique, which had been devised by minds superior to theirs, would hold them together; and how much chance, considering all the hazards, had any one of them of outliving the Boss? The Georgians, said popular gossip, live to great ages, even when they have web feet and withered arms.

Unless, of course, someone bumped him off! This idea had probably occurred to ten or twenty million people at one time or another, including the gentry thus hugely portrayed; yet he survived, the aura of State giving him a certain sanctity, but he leaving nothing to chance, nothing whatsoever. How was it Boris had once described him? As a Caucasian hillman, survivor of a hundred tribal vendettas, sleeping beneath his blanket on the mountain-side, who, as his enemy creeps up on him silently with raised knife, awakes by instinct from his sleep and in the same instant has struck first, swiftly and unerringly. But suppose someone struck him first. Would it be so different? Looking at that gallery of portraits, I was not convinced that a change of masters would bring about any material change in the condition of the country.

We entered the Metro station, squeezing on to the escalator. As I stood there, gently descending, I watched the people on

the other side, gently ascending. In every country it is something to do, but in Moscow the montage of Russian character is especially fascinating. Here, moving upward, their eyes fixed on some point in space, their bodies momentarily and gratefully relaxed, are the Russians: the shawled women, the old crones, the lean soldiers, the fat-breasted peasant girls in uniform, the white-faced paper-fine old men in mangy fur caps, the old kulak faces with the high cheekbones and the large roving eyes, the sleek round-faced bureaucrats, the priestlike Party Members, the scampering small fry in shrunken clothes and with pinched faces; in all these faces the impress of fatigue and weariness and the desperate and determined will to survive, such as one sees only among Russians.

Mitka rudely disturbed these reflections. The platform was packed with people and when the train drew in they rushed the doors. I have traveled in the London Tube, the New York Subway, the Paris Metro, but in none of these places have I ever seen a stampede like that which was a nightly occurrence in Moscow at this time. Those passengers who wanted to detrain had to fight for their existence, fight with knee and boot, arm and shoulder, for passageway against those trying to board the train. In this struggle it was everyone for himself, and none spared a thought for the woman knocked underfoot, trampled upon and now crawling on her hands and knees on the platform. I would have stood aside from all this had not Mitka suddenly flung his weight behind me in a prodigious thrust which carried me off my feet into the pack inside. Then, just as the doors sheared to, Mitka by an extra effort pressed in beside me. We rode, swaying as a pack, holding our chins high for air, almost overwhelmed by the stench of unwashed bodies and stale clothes, *mahorka* and, yes, garlic, at each station struggling again to prevent ourselves from being thrust out of the carriage by those surging behind. At last at one station I felt Mitka pull me by the arm and I stepped off the train just as the doors closed again. I thought it was the Maikovsky be-

cause there was a lot of stainless steel about, but I was not sure. We were carried forward with the mass of passengers and we climbed some steps and then we were out in the night.

"Phew!" I said, "some fresh air at last."

"Son of a bitch," Mitka said. He said it in Russian and I knew he meant for me not to talk.

I felt his hand on my sleeve and I followed his direction. Presently we left the crowd around the Metro station and we were walking down a street which I did not recognize. Night had come while we were traveling and now, in the gloom, it was cold and uncomfortable. Mitka said nothing. He walked faster than on the last occasion. Perhaps we had farther to walk. I did not recognize any landmarks and I thought that the idea of taking the Metro was probably a stratagem to deceive any possible shadowers. In any case, I was not sure that we would have lost them by taking the Metro since the crowds had prevented us practicing the old trick of being last on and last off the train. We must have walked more than a kilometer when Mitka suddenly came to a stop and I almost trod on his heels. We stood for a few moments in a doorway. I listened for approaching footsteps but there were none. Then Mitka took my arm and we hurried across the street to the doorway which I had recognized. I followed Mitka inside. He did not knock or call, but stepped quickly down the narrow passageway into the small room.

This time there was no light. It was overwarm and there was the smell of recent cooking, the smell of boiled noodles, the smell of *mahorka* again. The small stove was burning and by the glow cast through its grating I saw Rachel. She was wearing a dark dress so I saw only her white arms and her throat and face. The light, glancing warmly upward, illuminated her round-lipped smile and the large emotional eyes.

I murmured a greeting and Rachel replied.

She took my hat and coat and put them away. As my eyes became adjusted to the close darkness I saw the American woman, Mary Anderson, was there and also the man called

Gregor. They did not address me. I missed the cheerful presence of Lizavetta. It was really Lizavetta I had come to see. I had planned to tell her about Chukovsky's *Tarakanishche,* but now that I was here I wondered whether I would not postpone it until another day.

I asked Rachel if Lizavetta would be coming.

"Yes, soon."

I detected an atmosphere of constraint. I felt that something had happened. I sat there for a moment trying to sense the change. I looked closely at Mary, but her head was bent downward and all I could see was her tight bun of fair hair. Her fingers were skillfully knitting in the darkness. Each second or so there was the "click-click" of the bone needles and that was all the sound there was in the room. It was a sound which bore heavily on my nerves. I remembered what Cantwell-Smith had said about the official American attitude to people in Mary's situation and I did not know how to tell her. It was a hopeless situation to be in. I guessed that she probably depended on me to give her some faint ray of hope for her children's sake. But what could I say? I couldn't repeat Smith's brutal remarks; nor would it be any use advising her to call the Embassy. No doubt she placed her own interpretation on my silence, probably associated me with her own country's representatives in Russia, hated me, perhaps, as she hated them. That was the reason she refused to look at me, why she kept her head bent over her invisible knitting, accounted for the tight nervous movement of her hands, only the click-click of the needles, and she saying nothing.

Then the light from the fire in the little stove flared up a little and across the table I saw the gleam of Gregor's eyes, two large lozenge-shaped eyes, separated by a distance of two inches, I judged. The eyes blinked slowly in the light from the fire, like the eyes of an ox.

"You have been to the theater recently?" Rachel said.

"Yes. Yesterday I went to see *Boris Godunov.*"

"Ah, then you know what trouble you foreigners can cause us."

"Not altogether our fault."

"Of course, not your fault."

The intellectual conversation was over quickly, tonight. It seemed beside the point. I had the impression, not uncommon to foreigners in Russia, that my entrance had interrupted a conversation of timeworthy importance, a secret meeting perhaps, a conclave. Words which had been on the point of utterance would now, in my presence, never be uttered. It was an impression.

"Have you heard anything further from your son?" I said.

"My son!"

"I thought perhaps you might have had some news," I said.

"There is no news."

I wished Lizavetta would come. I wished Mitka would talk. I realized suddenly that without Lizavetta or Mitka there would be no pleasure in coming to this little room. I was glad that I could not stay too long tonight because I had promised to meet Vitalia at my room before curfew hour.

I turned to Mitka. I suggested that he get the vodka from my overcoat pocket. Mitka got up and went out. I waited for him to come back but he did not return. I was beginning to feel alarmed. The silence was embarrassing. I began to think that perhaps they had something against me, perhaps, I had caused them some trouble. I wondered if it could have been the *Tarakanishche*. Did Rachel know about the small volume and the scenario? I was not sure whether Lizavetta had given it to me with Rachel's consent or whether she had done it secretly. In any case I had promised not to discuss it with anyone and I felt that I couldn't very well bring the subject up now.

I was beginning to be nervous. There were some hurried steps outside the room and I jumped to my feet.

It was Lizavetta, however. It was a relief to see her. I noticed

that the others also stirred out of their gloomy attitudes. They looked at her expectantly.

She said a few words in rapid Russian. Then she took my hand and pressed it.

"I am so glad to see you," she said. "I am really grateful to you for coming at this time."

"And I am glad to see you," I said. "I was worried."

"It is nothing," Lizavetta said. "Lena is wonderful. She is like a mother to them."

"Oh," I said, "who is Lena?"

"They have not told you?" Lizavetta said.

"Nothing," I said. "Nothing."

"Oh," Lizavetta said.

Rachel said something quickly to Lizavetta in Russian. Lizavetta turned to me.

"Well, it is very sad," she said. "One of our neighbors has been taken."

"Yes."

"It is our neighbor Anna who lives with her family in the basement room of this building," Lizavetta said.

"Is she ill?" I said.

"No. We must be thankful for that," Lizavetta said.

"She was taken by the *En-kay-vay-day.*" Rachel said.

"Oh."

"Yes. It is so," Lizavetta said. "A woman in the next street has told us about it. This woman works in the same factory as Anna. She does not work in the same department as Anna, but she heard about it from one who does. Today at her work Anna suddenly began screaming and shouting."

"A case of hysteria," I said.

"Hysteria!" Rachel uttered the word with deep contempt.

"Anna began shouting that the Germans would not treat people as badly as this. She began screaming that *He* should be shot. She cursed *His* name until they carried her away."

"Poor woman," I said. "What will happen to her?"

Rachel began talking. "When will they understand that we are human. When will they cease to treat us like beasts. Like machines! Everything for the Fatherland! Everything for the Party! Everything for the Bureaucrats! Sacrifice! Sacrifice! Sacrifice! Work! Work! Work! Blood and bone to compensate for their stupid mistakes. No wonder *His* name is cursed. It is an accursed name."

I said nothing.

"What will they do next?" Rachel said, quietly. "At first it was ideals which spurred the workers, then it was propaganda and promises, then they did it with money, with high and low wage scales worse even than your capitalist countries, after that it was emulation, Stakanovism and the Socialist Competitions, now it is the stimulus of hunger and fear. What will it be next? Will it be anti-Semitism?"

"Not that!" I said.

"Innocent foreigner." Rachel's sarcasm was bitter. "Do you not know that the Bolsheviks were always identified as Jews? The traitor Trotsky was a Jew. In the Ukraine in 1937 the interrogators beat their victims, crying 'Confess, *Zheed!*' "

"What about Dvator?"

"Propaganda. You were here in April?"

"No. We were all moved to Kuibyshev."

"Ah, in April, during the Jewish Easter, Moscow was full of rumors of ritual murders. Did you not hear of the woman whose little child was missing but who traced the child through finding pieces of its clothing and who burst into a room in an apartment not far from here and found a mad woman there cooking at her stove, cooking the liver and heart of a tiny child?"

There was an agonized gasp from the American girl. I looked at her quickly and I saw that she was weeping.

"Ah, I tell you, people kept their children indoors during that month. Many rumors circulate in Moscow, because there is nothing to tell us what is false and what is true.

But people do not begin rumors for the sake of doing so in Moscow."

"Perhaps it was those reports from Leningrad about people eating each other," I said.

"I tell you," Rachel said, "there is anti-Semitism throughout the Red Army. When the time comes to sacrifice a portion of the bureaucracy to the people's hatred and fury and frustration, it will be the Jews again."

I did not know what to say. The atmosphere in the little room was tense. Lizavetta hung her head sadly. Mary had ceased knitting. There was no sound. Rachel began talking again.

"In our country," Rachel said, "it is now the rule on all appropriate occasions, to offer a little prayer. Children are obliged to offer this little prayer every morning before they begin their lessons. Let us offer this little prayer now."

"No, please Rachel," Lizavetta said.

"Thank Comrade *Khozin* for this happy life." Rachel's voice was full of bitterness again. "It is a prayer that Anna should repeat to herself during her journey."

"What will happen to your neighbor Anna?" I said.

"She is being sent somewhere east. To a *kolkhoz*. I know that, because they have just come for her things. But there is really nothing to send. The most difficult problem is that she has been feeding a baby."

"She has children?" I said.

"Four of them," Lizavetta said.

"And her husband?"

"She had just learned of his death. He died of wounds. But there is an old *Babushka* and another neighbor will feed the baby. And there is Lena, the eldest girl, who will look after them."

Lizavetta looked bright again.

"After all," she said, "it is not so bad. It would be worse if they had sent her children with her. How could she have fed the children on a *kolkhoz* in Kazakstan?"

"Do you mean they sent her away without any regard for her children at all?" I said.

Rachel laughed. "Do you think they pay any attention to those things? You foreigner with your humanistic ideas! Do you think that there is any room for such sentimentality in the materialist philosophy?"

"On the Volga there is much difficulty," Lizavetta said. "One who came from Kazan yesterday told me that at the airplane factory there are thirty thousand workers who have only two hundred grams of bread each day. He said that many have swollen bellies from hunger and fall down at their machines."

"It is true that the Germans have cut the Volga supply line," I said. "We have heard it from London."

"In Moscow it is better," Lizavetta said. "It is always better in Moscow."

"It is better wherever there are bureaucrats," Rachel said.

"I'm sorry about your friend Anna," I said.

"They call it prophylactic arrest," Rachel said.

"No habeas corpus in Russia," I said.

"Prophylactic arrest is a good name for it," Rachel said. "It means they apply the medicine before the disease spreads."

"Hysteria *can* become epidemic," I said.

"Bah! Hysteria! It is not hysteria they are frightened of, but the idea. They have to crush the idea before it possesses other minds. Otherwise people might find their freedom."

I thought Rachel was distraught. "Well," I said, "it would be a little awkward now. The Germans might win."

"You foreigner! You apologist for terror! You are quite happy so long as it is here that these things happen and not in your own country. Now, you look at us as though we were the people of some native state, savages whose function it is to be governed by terror. It pleases you. It gives you a sense of superiority. Your little petit-bourgeois world seems safe. We have failed and you are right."

I did not quite know how to answer this outburst.

"You do wrong to think of us as barbarians. This which we have here is what you will aspire to when your capitalism inevitably collapses and you flounder through Fascism. And then it will be your problem."

I said nothing. Suddenly Rachel saw my confusion under this attack. She smiled and leaning toward me she put her hand on my arm.

"Take no notice of an old woman," she said. "It is a prophylactic arrest."

I began to see the meaning of her words.

"Is it possible," I said, "that they will, so to speak, look for the source of the infection?"

Rachel laughed. "Now you understand the surrounding gloom. Of course, for nothing is left to chance in our country."

I thought for a moment. "Is your neighbor Anna an intellectual?"

"No," Lizavetta said. "She was a Soviet worker. A sturdy woman, the last you would say to break down. She had no other interest but her children."

"Well, then . . ."

"You are so innocent," Rachel said. "You see it does not occur to them that anyone can have ideas of their own, that a plain woman may arrive at a conclusion by natural observation and deduction. In their view everything proceeds from something else: for every flower there is a seed: therefore any ideas which Anna may have expressed in her desperation can only have been inserted there by some influence or propaganda."

I had to think carefully.

"That means," I said, "they will look into Anna's surroundings."

"Yes."

"They may look over everyone in her neighborhood."

"Certainly."

"That is bad for you."

"It is bad for everyone. But it may not be for sometime yet. They are very busy."

"I see," I said. "Then it is not good for you to be associated with a foreigner."

"No, no," Lizavetta said. "It does not matter. Do not be embarrassed. It is nothing."

I was perplexed. But then I thought Lizavetta's last remark the best indication that they were embarrassed by my presence. Besides there was still a constrained atmosphere in the little room. Neither Gregor nor Mary had spoken and Rachel's bitterness was not encouraging. I very soon excused myself, saying I had an appointment. Lizavetta insisted that Mitka should accompany me back to a part of the city with which I was familiar.

I said goodbye to them and went out again into the cold night.

It was a gloomy night. There was no glimmer of light and the cold struck at the joints like icy fomentations. I walked on away from the apartment building, feeling again a depression about Moscow, the solitude, the loneliness. At the roots of my bad feeling was a bad conscience about the little book.

Mitka took me firmly by the arm, guiding me around the heaps of snow in the street. It was some minutes before I realized that he was a little drunk.

"Mitka," I said, "what happened to my vodka?"

For answer he took me strongly by the biceps, hugged me close to him, and kissed me robustly on both cheeks.

It was the embrace of a bear. I felt that his strength was considerable; I felt his rough face against mine; I smelt the harsh but warm smell of vodka.

"You are beautiful friend," Mitka said. He said it in Russian. Then he remembered his English. "Son of a bitch! Here is vodka!"

He took the bottle from his pocket. I heard him shake

it, heard him pull the cork out, and then felt the smooth surface of the bottle as he thrust it into my hand.

I took a swig of the stuff and immediately felt better. It was what I needed. I held the bottle out to Mitka. He took it firmly and put it to his mouth and I heard him swallowing hard. Then he smacked the cork back, put the bottle back in his coat pocket, and took me by the arm. We went walking on.

"Tonight," he said, "I am in Red Army. Yes, I volunteer." He thumped his chest. "I Mitka volunteer for Front."

"You have?" I said.

"Crazy like a bastard! That's Mitka."

"Don't say that," I said, "about your duty."

"Beautiful friend, you are right. To be soldier is duty every man. Is honorable. Is monumental, yes?"

"It has its compensations," I said.

"Son-of-a-bitch compensations!"

He halted. He became confidential. He whispered in my ear.

"Is right time, yes? Tomorrow, maybe next day, many *En-kay-vay-day.* Today is right time for Front, eh?"

"You think things are that bad?"

"Bad? Son-of-a-bitch bad. Front is better."

"So, you're beating the *shtrafnaya rota* to it."

"Ah, you know *shtrafnaya rota.* You are an intelligent spy. I have said so."

He took my arm again and began singing as we walked. I was alarmed for the police.

"You'll have the damned *militsia* stopping up," I said.

"Goddam *militsia* crazy like bastards," Mitka said. "They not make sense. When I drunk I say anything. Yes, I can curse *Khozin.* Say anything. They not care. Kick my belly, but not care what I say. But if I sober they not kick my belly but send me Siberia. Yes. Crazy like bastards. So, I am always drunk. You like vodka?"

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He halted again, looked at me. I could see him grinning in the gloom.

"Yes, I like vodka," I said.

"Beautiful friend," Mitka said in Russian. He seized my arms again, pinning them to my sides, and planted a large kiss on either cheek.

"You stay Russia long time?" he said.

"I don't know," I said.

"Go away, beautiful friend. Russia is sad country. Come back when everything is better. Go away soon. Soon! Foreigners who stay Russia long time never leave. Go soon."

We finished the vodka and Mitka threw the empty bottle into the snow. We were now blood brothers.

We went on walking. I thought we were somewhere in the Tverskoi boulevard. Mitka had my arm firmly held. He was singing.

Suddenly as we came to the Tverskaya, he stopped. He gave me two more resounding kisses, stood back, drew himself up to his full height and threw a tremendous salute.

"Do Svidanya," he said.

Then he about-faced and marched off into the night. I did not know where. To some Red Army depot, I guessed. Well, I had lost a friend. But he would be all right. He was one of those men about whom you are confident in war. He had been an *Intourist* driver. He would find another soft job somewhere, cook or quartermaster. I liked him very much. Whatever else you thought about Russia, there were some Russians your heart went out to.

What shall I do now? What shall I do?

I had thought never to see him again. And yet he comes. What can they be thinking of? Why is it allowed? He comes among us, bringing suspicion on our heads, on my head, because I too am foreign born. He has no help for me. He ignores me. He is like the rest, so secure, so smug, looking at me, thinking, "It serves you right for having married a Communist." I hate him for that. I hate them all. They cause unrest and worry and trouble and they are always plotting against us. I was sure this one would not come again. I was so sure. Yet he has come. Why is it permitted?

Perhaps they are following him? Perhaps they want to know where he goes?

Oh God, I had not thought of that!

And now there is Anna. They will think that I have influenced Anna. All the suspicion will fall on me. They may decide to send me away. And then what will happen to Robert Junior and little John? They will be left behind, just as Anna's children were left. So, if they take me, Robert Junior and John will become waifs like those thousands of others and they will roam about the streets looking for food and they will ride on trains from one region to another. *Bezsprizorni.* Then the police will round them up with dogs and put them in prison camps until they can be put to labor. Oh God, what shall I do?

The first thing to do is to leave this house. I must move away from this house and this atmosphere. But I have tried to exchange my room for another without success. I would exchange

my room for one much worse, just to be away from this Route, but none will exchange with me. None wishes to be so constantly under surveillance and to have their *propusk* cards franked every month. In Moscow you cannot rent a room; but you can inherit a room or exchange your room for another. It makes everything so difficult. The superintendent of this apartment house was suspicious when I asked her if she knew of anybody who wanted to exchange. She understood why I wanted to leave her house. But she is not a bad woman although she reports on everyone. She is a great gossip. That is why I thought she might have heard of someone else who wished to exchange.

She said that it is not always a disadvantage to live on the Route. She told me about a woman who shared a room with her brother. They had inherited the room from their parents who were now dead. The brother who was a soldier had a woman friend and when he went off to the front he made over his share of the room to his woman friend. He had wanted to repay his woman friend for her kindness to him. But his sister did not want to share her room with her brother's woman especially as it would be for life if her brother were killed. So she came to our house superintendent and they arranged, between them, for the room to be exchanged for one on that portion of the house which faces the Route. When her brother's woman found that to live in this room meant that she would be constantly under the observation of the N.K.V.D. she forewent her claim and so the sister now has a room all to herself.

The house superintendent says they are particularly careful now because Moscow is full of bad persons. She says there are many robberies. In the house next door, a man came one night with a club in his hand and robbed a woman. He took her bread ration cards. That is what they are stealing: bread rations. The house superintendent says they are deserters from the army and criminals who do these things and they carry passports they have robbed from the dead. It is not difficult. Many are dying now of pneumonia and consumption and other

sicknesses. There is much typhus. The doctors always say it is malaria, but that is for the statistics. The doctors say there is no room in the hospitals for the sick because the hospitals are full of the wounded. No one has any drugs and many people die of such things as diphtheria. When someone dies now their family leaves them in their bed and uses their ration cards. They cover the dead and it is just as if they were asleep. It is so cold now that the dead are soon frozen and there is no smell. In one house near here, our house superintendent says, there are now ten dead people. Someone is lucky, she said, because they have all died at the beginning of the month, this being only November 6. At the end of the month when it is time to get new ration cards the relatives, or the house superintendent, has to declare the dead because the dead cannot get up and go for new ration cards at the registry. It is sometimes possible for others to impersonate the dead. It is the responsibility of the house superintendent to prevent such things. In Leningrad, last winter, it was only the house sueprintendents, they say, who survived. So how is one to exchange a room in such circumstances? And if I cannot exchange my room how am I to leave this neighborhood?

Perhaps someone will die and I can take their room. The house superintendent says that many more will die this winter, but to inherit a room I must arrange with the dying. She says if I can promise a good burial, one who is about to die may make over their room to me. She means that I may be able to share a room now with someone who is dying and then after that it will be mine. But I am afraid of such a thing. If it is typhus there is danger for Robert Junior and John. The house superintendent says that it is hard to get people buried now. She says it costs a bottle of vodka to have the gravediggers dig up the frozen ground and then, because there is no wood, you have to use the same coffin as the last one. But I cannot bear to think of waiting for someone to die and then dragging one of those unpainted coffins through the streets on a little sledge.

d where could I get a bottle of vodka?

The house superintendent says that many are afraid of dying now and that they would welcome someone who would promise to bury them properly. Especially they would welcome an American because they know it could not happen with an American. That an American would never do it. She means that an American like myself would never eat human flesh. The house superintendent says the dying fear this. Especially the old who were born in the former times. It is because of the cannibalism in Leningrad last winter. They say the survivors in Leningrad were two kinds: the cadres and those who ate others. The ration in Leningrad was one hundred grams of bread every day. That is all anybody received. And there were thousands and thousands of frozen dead bodies stacked up in warehouses and in vacant spaces in the city because the survivors were not strong enough to bury the dead and so the dead lay there until the spring when the ground thawed and then it was the women who buried them. Of every five who survived, four were women, they say. But with all those frozen bodies it is not surprising there was cannibalism. There was no meat on those poor frozen bones and there was no ugliness of butchery but the hungry took the heart, liver and kidneys from the inside and none ever saw it. But here in Moscow it is not like that. We have four hundred grams of bread every day and there are other things. But the dying are always afraid.

The house superintendent says that I might find one who was old and sick and who would welcome me and then I would wait for them to die and they would bequeath me the room. But I must find a new room quickly. I cannot wait. She says there is one who will soon be dead in a room in this house, but what would be the use of that to me? I would still be on the Route. The house superintendent says that there are many murders now and all kinds of crimes and that the police are all the time rounding them up. Nothing is said of this in the newspapers so everything comes by word of mouth. Even the victories are known before the communiqué appears; but the rumors almost always concern our disasters. The house super-

intendent says the Fascists have many agents among us who are employed to start rumors. And then she laughs, because this is a kind of official line.

But I do not laugh, because I know she is provoking me.

GREGOR SOKUR

I have often asked myself: what shall I do if the pistol misfires.

Shall I turn quickly and try to seize the pistol from the executioner? Or shall I run down the steps and turn blindly from wall to wall, like a rat, seeking a way out? It is something I have often thought about, because while I am prepared to accept death and will walk unaided down those steps to the dark cellar and will be ready for the bullet which will explode the cortex of my brain, expanding its soft nose and passing out through my face, and for the cellar floor which will rise to steady my retchings, while I am prepared for this, yet I am not prepared for the not-happening.

The quality of resignation is the quality of the vision of death. To see clearly the shape of one's own death, and to be convinced of it, is to believe in it. The executioner then becomes the instrument unrelated to the decree. Between the executioner and the about-to-be-executed there is a strange bond; a stealthy feeling of gratitude on the part of the about-to-be-executed for the executioner and if there is shame it is all on the side of the about-to-be-executed and he, or she, is unlooking and impersonal in the presence of the executioner. For to foresee one's death, and to be

convinced of it, even though it be only a few minutes before the act, is to believe in Fate; is to have knowledge of the future; and to be unprepared for Fate's trickery.

In the Krim, I remember, in the last days of the Civil War, men stood ready to be executed, some praying or fingering a Cross, but mostly standing silently, not looking at us, the executioners, unheeding us as though it would be embarrassing, and it was something I well understood and knew, then, would be my own fate. But once, I remember, two men whom we were about to shoot, turned suddenly and began to run. We looked at them in astonishment, Mikhail and me, and then we began laughing, and we laughed uproariously, and we did not fire a shot after them, for we were so busy with the executions, but none of the other men standing ready to die noticed the men running or heard our laughter, for they were standing quietly awaiting their fate.

I have seen many men executed. In the Krim there were so many, some executioners took cocaine to relieve the strain of their work, and yet I can remember only these men running away. In the end it was a hardship for the executioners and, startling the about-to-be-executed, they would drive them running over the rocks and shoot them running as in sport, and this was resented by the about-to-be-executed. I have executed many men and I understand the bond between the executioner and the executed which absolves the executioner from guilt by placing the decree in the hands of Fate or Destiny and not by the malice of accident or man. So much ego have men, so much sense of life existing within themselves, and surrounding themselves, that they must believe in a universe beginning and ending with themselves, and this is Order and System. For belief in Order and System is merely the belief in the transfer to men of the qualities they ascribe to Fate. But what happens when accident intervenes? What happens when the pistol misfires? Then man's inevitable fate is suddenly abrogated

and the accident becomes also an act of Fate, is a symbol or an event.

I am thinking of this because of an event of which I have just heard. It concerns a young man called Sergi Stephanovich. Before the war Sergi was a student. His father and mother had been peasants in the Tambov region. His father and mother had been captured and shot by the White Guards during the Civil War. His mother came to Moscow to live with her sister, also widowed. The two women shared a room in the *Krasnaya Presnya* district where Sergi grew up. He was a very quiet youth and worked hard at his studies. He was not at that time a member of the Party, or of the Komsomols. Just before the war he was drafted into the Red Army and he went to a school and became a junior officer.

One day during the recent fighting on the Kalinin front his unit captured nine enemy soldiers who spoke Russian. They were Ukrainians. They wore German uniforms with white markings on the sleeves. The company commander left the prisoners in the charge of Lieutenant Sergi and one Red Army soldier with a submachine gun. The battle was being fiercely fought and they were in the way of the battle. Sergi did not know what to do with the prisoners. If they were Germans, he said to the soldier, we could march them back, for we must consider the honor of the Red Army. But they are Russians. He allowed the thought to anger him. Slowly it angered him and then it angered him very much.

"You must all die," he shouted.

The men stood before him. They were bareheaded and the cold was reddening their ears. They did not look at Sergi. One of the men smiled. It was the Ukrainian style. Sergi unstrapped his pistol.

"You must all die," he said fiercely.

One of the men, the one who had smiled, nodded his head.

"You are traitors, double-dealers, scum," Sergi shouted, remembering the words.

The men said nothing. They did not look at him. Sergi did not know how to kill them.

"Take off your boots," he said.

The men shuffled, standing first on one foot and then the other, and they pulled off their heavy German army boots, putting their boots down in front of them. They stood in the snow, their feet wrapped in dirty rags, their toes bandaged for frostbite.

"Do not attempt to escape," Sergi said, "or the soldier will shoot you in the belly and legs and that will be more painful."

The men stood there. One shuffled his freezing feet.

"Lie down" Sergi shouted. "Lie down here." He drew a line in the snow with his boot.

Some of the men looked at Sergi. Then they understood. They got down on their knees in the snow and then they lay down in the soft snow as though it were a bed. One of the men, the one who had smiled, stretched out his hand and caught the hand of his comrade.

Sergi stepped along the line of the reclining men and as he passed by each he put his pistol to the man's skull and pressed the trigger. The reports were muffled. The body of each man quivered and sunk deeper into the snow. At the seventh man the pistol snapped without firing. Sergi stepped back and inserted a new clip of cartridges and went on to the next man. It did not take over a minute to execute the nine men. There had been no sound except the plunk of each shot fired tight against the skull. Sergi then carefully strapped his pistol in its holster and stepped back from the execution line He asked the Red Army man with the submachine gun for tobacco. The Red Army man took out a small tin and shook him some *mahorka* on a piece of paper torn from *Pravda.*

Drawing on the rough cigarette Sergi began to curse. He

cursed long and hard. "That accursed corporal," he said, "It was he who stole my tobacco. Goddam him, just wait until I lay hands on him. I'll beat the hide off him. The accursed serpent. The son of a bitch! Does he think he can get away with that. Say, what does he think I am! Just wait until I get hold of him. The son of a bitch . . ." Sergi went on swearing.

Suddenly the soldier standing beside him jerked about. Sergi, too, took sudden cold. From behind him, from among the dead men, there was a voice.

"Tovarish," it said, "please don't kill me."

Sergi spun round. It was the seventh man in the line. The man was on his hands and knees and tears were streaming from his eyes.

"Tovarish," he cried again, "please don't kill me. . . ."

"Damn my mother!" Sergi said. "I missed him when I changed the clip."

"He thinks it's him you've been cursing," the soldier said.

But Sergi had already loosened his pistol. He stepped quickly up to the kneeling man and shot him through the forehead so that he fell dead into the snow. The tears in the man's eyes froze immediately.

I mention the tears because I believe it indicates that the man already regretted his fate.

KARL IVANOVICH

Every night he sat by the window watching the roadway. The window was on the first floor of the apartment building and afforded a close view of the roadway. He had learned to

distinguish the automobiles and now he knew the important ones were preceded by guards and came only at night. In the morning, Rachel would come to the room bringing bread and herring and tea. He would eat and she would watch him. They spoke very seldom now. She would fuss a little with his bed or his clothes, but they avoided talking. It was hard for him to look at her; her expression was one of resignation; her skin was white and soft and her large eyes inconsolably sad; her body, beneath her dark dress, was relaxed and aging. Yet he knew that she believed in him; that she approved.

It was a week since he had arrived. Now, as he waited by the window, watching the road, it seemed that he had been in Moscow longer than that; the period of his exile was receding. He remembered how he had stood for a few minutes in the Bielorussian station taking in again all the sights and sounds of his beloved Moscow. He had looked on the surging mass of men and women hastening this way and that to the trains, and those others who stood waiting or lay sleeping on the station floor. They were entraining some unit for the front and there was a great throng of soldiers. It had excited him. He had felt suddenly proud to be in the Red Army. Then he had recollected his role. As he shouldered his bag and began slowly walking off the station a soldier, passing, had shouted:

"Hey, comrade, you need a bath."

He had been scratching himself. He scratched himself without thinking about it. And now he was in a place where it was not normal to be scratching oneself! And there were baths! Outside in the street he had been deeply moved by the life about him. The big city had never seemed so fine. And everywhere there was movement: automobiles, locomotives whistling, people walking this way and that. It was a long time since he had seen so many people; so many fine buildings; so many beautiful streets. He had wanted to put out his hand and to stroke the lovely city. He had smiled to himself and had walked on

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with his bag. Then he had remembered the soldier's cry about a bath. A bath! He thought of the bath with intense pleasure. He remembered that there was a bath-house on the Tverskaya. It was a bath-house he had never been to, but he found it, and the woman at the door smiled at him, a kind and beautiful smile. They looked again at his papers and they looked at him and they saw he was from the Front.

Yes, he was from the Front. He was in the uniform of a lieutenant of the Border Guards. His uniform was stained with the marks of combat service. The long overcoat with its unhemmed skirt looked as though it had been slept in many times. His woolen cap was grey with dirt. He wore a regulation pistol at his hip and a map case on a thin strap from his shoulder. He carried a tightly sewn kitbag; in it there was an automatic rifle, in two parts, a full magazine, and four hand grenades. His papers said his name was Vladimir Konstantinovich Efremov and he was to report himself to the School for Political Officers in Moscow. He had a Party card. They saw he was from the Front and they smiled at him.

In the bath-house there was soap. Small fragments of soap. There was also the miracle of hot water. There was steam and and the smell of birch leaves and there were many men scrubbing themselves. Before he went to the water he went through his clothes for lice, crushing the seams of the undergarments with his thumbnail and picking the lice off the crotch of his trousers. At the troughs other men looked at him. They could see he was from the Front and they said nothing. He was very thin. He was so thin that he wondered where the strength in him came from. But there was great strength in him. In the bath house there was a fragment of broken mirror and he saw his face for the first time for almost a year. At first he thought it was the face of one of the other men crowding around him peering over each other's shoulders to see their faces. He bobbed his head about to get himself in the right position to see himself; then he grinned and he saw himself grinning. That was

he: the hollow cheeks and the high rising cheekbones, the hair shaved to an uneven skull, the thin roosterlike neck and the deep hollow under the chin, the yellow teeth and the dust-begrimed beard; that was he, but so also were the large dark eyes burning bright with intelligence and purpose.

In the old days such a man would have taken a private bathroom: that is what they said private bathrooms were for: for the lame and the lovelorn. But now there were many men bathing there who bore the scars of war, some still fresh and red, while others bore the marks of illness and malnutrition. But they would have stared, those other men, had they known the history of his emaciation; a wasting more honorable than battle scars, something to be worn proudly as a saint his scourgings. Perhaps many of these men had also been behind barbed wire: who could tell? Perhaps they too had heard the guards, in their high wooden towers, shouting at them to keep away from the wire, had heard the rifle-bolt cocking, had felt the tired fear in all the herded men and women below. That had been where his hatred and his purpose had nurtured: those days in the prison stockade; thinking, never ceasing to think, "They have made a beast out of me: I shall act like a beast." He had looked around him to see who else among his fellow prisoners had felt as he felt; but he saw none. They had seemed miserable creatures (he could not see himself) and none ready to speak freely. That was because there were among them many who would report them: always the poor human material ready to sell a comrade or cringe a favor! But what else was there for them? Nothing but ice and snow all around them and no escape across the frozen river (he never knew what river it was) or the wide frozen steppe. No escape, no idea of escape, except in his own mind. That was what he had thought until the day that they had taken six of their number, one of them a woman, and under rifles of the guards, and before the whole camp had forced these six to sit on the river ice. The prisoners had stood inside their stockade and they had watched the six sitting out there, small dark patches against the white

snow, sitting, waiting for their hams to freeze, their sexual organs and then their bellies, sitting there, making no movement, uttering no sound, waiting for themselves to freeze to death. And not all those in camp looked at this; when it was clear that the punishment was death, when it was certain that it was not to be a punishment of minutes, when the face of one man went as white as the ice around him, then all turned away, heads hanging low, silent, all in terror. And that was because these six had plotted to escape and someone in that camp had informed on them.

After that his mind and body had been absorbed with hatred; first as a directed exterior force, then more subtly as a functioning of a mind under duress. All day, as they labored, clearing the river bank for lumber loading in the spring, he had thought of those six frozen prisoners. Until then he had tried to put humanism out of his mind; to think humanistically was illogical and in Russia led to weakness and inertia; it was necessary to think only of the goal. He had always thought as a Communist. But now, caged-in like an animal, condemned to labor, without trial, without appeal, he reached the conclusion that to have a goal was a fundamental error of the thesis. For what was the goal? When was it to be reached? Now a quarter of a century after the Revolution, were they any closer to it? Was the classless society a dream? Was the theory of the diminution of government a Machiavellian invention? And if these objectives were some day to be reached what species of sub-man would have survived to enjoy them? That was how he had suddenly seen it: and from this basis his thought had taken another sweep forward. There was no goal because all was change: whatever end you reached could not be the end, could only be a point of departure. The goal was an allusion. Therefore, it was necessary to fashion a political philosophy which would care for the living, for the present as for the future, for the future was in the present. Thus simply had he reached this conclusion.

The spring came and they were marched away from the

river. They became one of those sad processions that travel on foot all over Russia: a hundred or more ragged men trudging along the unmade roads with six or eight almost equally ragged guards walking at the rear and flanks with rifles at the trail. After a few days they were herded into another wire-enclosed stockade. Here the food was worse. There was no longer potato soup: only five hundred grams of black bread each day. The prisoners knew that it was starvation, but none spoke of it. Karl began to feel the ravening pangs of hunger. If there had been grass or leaves or bark within reach he would have eaten them just to keep his belly full. The men became like animals, watchful, stealthy in the pursuit of food, distrustful of each other, apprehensive always of the stronger. But there was one man among the prisoners who did not forget he was a man. Karl had seen him among them. He was a Ukrainian with a straggling beard. This man came to Karl and proposed that they make an arrangement whereby each went without food on alternate days so that the other could eat both rations and thus fill himself once and relieve the never-ceasing ache of emptiness. The man said that he tried to keep his ration of bread for one day so that on the second day he could eat both rations together, but that he had been unable to do this. He offered to be the first to forego his ration. Karl agreed to the man's plan and they did this; each eating a kilo of bread every other day and nothing in between. The Ukrainian's name was Pavlenko. He was from Kharkov. He had fled Kharkov when the Germans entered and the police had found him in Moscow without proper papers. Neither Pavlenko nor Karl were strong enough to talk to each other for very long. They found that their tongues did not say the words in their minds and the effort to make speech merely caused their saliva glands to work and their mouths filled with the moisture and their lips could not hold it in their mouths. But Karl and Pavlenko felt for each other in a comradely way. They continued to share one another's rations, the one always eating secretly in order not to pain the other.

One day in this new camp where they were working on the foundations of a huge factory, typhus broke out. A week later ten were dead in their wooden bunks. The guards did not enter the huts. They did not notice that there were some missing until the others began quarreling like dogs over the rations of the dead: then the guards knew that there was one or more dead and they took a count of heads and ordered the prisoners to bury the dead in the compound. All this time Karl had been thinking: hunger stimulates thought, it is a truth known only to hermits and saints. He felt his thought was of the sharpest, purest kind. And in this thinking the pretension of human claims to achievement was bared: all the great words, the words of the greatest, became a huge ironic joke, freedom, liberty, equality, democracy, justice, humanity, mankind, the Party, the State, the Revolution, the Cadres, the Withering Away. He would repeat the words hour after hour without being aware of it. There grew in his mind the urge to revolt: the senseless Russian riot, Lenin had called it. The peasant's going berserk; the blind will to kill and kill and kill, to destroy and destroy; everything, anything, all that pertained to oppression and authority, the fury that would be assuaged only by a great flowing of blood. His hunger-sharpened mind drew enjoyment out of this; his sensitive imagination saw the blood on the ground, the axe cleaving the skull, and now there were flames leaping along the rooftree of the hut in which he sheltered and he would watch them, not in terror, but with satisfaction.

One day, while they were working on the foundations, working ever so slowly, with many rests, three men among them together rose from their tasks and, without any signal, began walking toward the guards. Every man in the working party, without any signal, suddenly stood still. In their hearts there was a sudden pumping of blood. The guards, who were also Russians, sensed the feeling. There was the sharp sound of rifle shots and the three men who had been walking toward the guards fell dead in their tracks. As though they had not

heard the shots the men in the working party continued with what they had been doing.

Karl was among those who were later ordered to bury the three dead men. They were to be buried where they had fallen. Slowly, with effort, Karl hacked a shallow trench and as he rolled one of the dead men into it he looked at him, wondering. The lice were already gathered in the eyebrows and ears of the corpse, swarming off the chill body in search of another host. The man's rags were filthy, his hair matted, his feet wrapped in rags that were caked with mud that had set, frozen like clay. The smell was something Karl was already immune to. But this was a man: this was a man who had *acted!* Out of that now stilled heart there had risen an impulse, a protest! Karl reached the final clear conclusion of all his thinking: the only possible act of the oppressed, the downtrodden, is an individual act, and the only possible weapon was the individual life. What had confused his thought, he now saw clearly, was the inclination to rationalize the act. It was unnecessary to invent a a whole system to suit the act, as Bakunin and others had done: all that was necessary was for a man to act. With their modern methods of oppression it was no longer possible to form secret parties, to conspire, or to organize opposition; therefore, it had to be an individual act, a personal decision; it was the only thing left to humanity; it was what the blind oppressed masses had done countless number of times throughout the ages. In committing the act it was necessary and fitting that a man should lose his life: it was not desirable that he should live to enjoy the fruits of his act, the punishment; the essence of the act was the sacrifice. But there was one thing, one piece of rationality worth the thinking: it was a better act if was directed against the instrument of oppression. The blind senseless protest was something; but the planned and directed protest was better; because then the area of protest was greater. What happened afterward did not matter; it was stupid to pretend that the act could be converted into a system for trade unions, as Proudhon thought. The world had gone

beyond that stage; it was now entering the era of the great collective States; the individual could conform, or he might not be given the opportunity of conforming, but if he wished to protest he could do it only by the sacrifice of his life in what would be a deliberately conceived futility. As a Russian and a Communist he could not see that there was any other course for humanity than that which had been taken by the Soviets. He knew that the war could end only in Revolution in which the proletariat would fulfill its historical function. If the war ended any other way, it would be merely a brief postponement of Revolution, or the declining capitalist states, confused, chaotic, finally through Fascism, the last prop of the old order, would reach the same end: the great collective State. He felt that his message was for all men: nothing precludes tyranny and man must know that there is always the act, that there is only the act; the act must always be against Them, and it must never be forgotten; with all their guards and their police and their spies and their science they must learn never to discount the act, the senseless act irrationally performed.

This is what he thought in his extremity.

He saw it clearly as the earth fell around the bullet-perforated body of the Unknown who had made his protest, whose life, so easily forfeit, had shown how cheap life was and how contemptible to hold when death could be so fine. And this was the final lesson: that though their lives had been taken this way they themselves had not thought or calculated the effect of their act, or planned a system arising from the act, yet nevertheless they had sown a seed which would grow and bear. The best act was the one most widely known, that one having the widest publication.

There would be reprisals. And that was how the masses were intimidated, made clay footed and corrupt: they could think of the misery of an oppressed humanity, but not of those they held dearest and closest, of their wives and children and their mothers. So let there be reprisals, so many

reprisals that the executioners have no rest, so that the whip and the club and the vise and the pistol know no moment of stillness, so that all those nearest to us are destroyed or dispersed and there is nothing left, neither sentiment nor sentience.

Spring now gave place to summer and the food improved. There was soup every day now. There were also soft grasses and locusts to eat. Bluntened fingers explored the crevices of old timber for grubs and cockroaches. Later some found sunflower seeds. One day in July the guards marched all the men to another camp. Here a political officer addressed them. He said they were now in the Red Army and would be sent to the Front. They were given better food, more bread, some herring. They were given old uniforms. The political officer spoke to them every day. He read *Pravda* to them. After a few days the former prisoners began to talk among themselves. They talked of the new food and the new clothes. The political officer began to talk about the glorious deeds of the Red Army and the atrocities committed by the Fascists. The news began to filter through the camp of the great disaster at the Front. It was said that the Fascists had broken through on the whole front between Voronesh and Novorossiisk and were advancing on the Caucasus and the Don. It was said there had been an Order of the Day condemning the Red Army leadership and calling on all Red Army men to fight for the Fatherland. The Order of the Day proclaimed the formation of *shtrafnaya rota* in which deserters and criminals would be placed.

So that was what they were, a *shtrafnaya rota.*

The understanding of this did not dismay the former prisoners. It took several days for the idea to develop in their starved minds. Then they were jubilant. It was true then that they would be sent to the Front. The idea of their usefulness in action grew on them. It affected their carriage; they stood more upright, lost the appearance of having dragging feet and the hangdoggedness, their eyes

became steady. The political officer spoke to them every day: he read *Pravda* editorials; he cut out articles and pinned them up on a board. They read the articles eagerly. One day they were given rifles. This filled them with a new excitement. All had had military training, but the political officer gave them instruction. Sometimes a man would stroke his rifle as though it were an animal pet. Karl shared the feeling to a lesser degree. Having the rifle was the measure of being a man again. The former prisoners in whose hearts there had been nothing but despair felt a new dignity. Karl's own mind was affected by the transition. There was now only room for thinking about the future: every day was filled with speculation about what was going to happen to them; after the months of hopeless imprisonment this was like a release into a new world. Then one day Pavlenko, his Ukrainian comrade, said to him: "You too are full of enthusiasm for dying, I see." Karl looked at him. Pavlenko said: "It is good to die, but it is unnecessary to be enthusiastic." Karl was ashamed and bitter. Could he have been so easily misled? How easily one is trapped by one's vanity. He felt a new kind of hopelessness: the hopelessness to firm purpose or clear action arising out of such febrile creatures as human beings. How easily they could be regimented when once the secret of their responses was known. But thinking of this he found new strength in his idea: because it was more than ever necessary to make a protest, a demonstration, an act. But how would it be done? They had been given rifles but no ammunition; and every man was now against him. Yet he began to plan.

One day the political officer told them they were going to the Front. They were marched to a railway and loaded into box cars and the doors bolted behind them. They were given bread. There was a hole in the floor for their excretions. The train lay in the station for a long time and then pulled out. They traveled southwest for several days with many long stops. At the stops they were flung loaves of

bread. Then at one stop the doors were flung open and they were ordered to descend. They dropped to the ground, shaking themselves, stamping their feet. They were in a front line region. They were marched across a wide steppe. Their officers who were in the uniform of the Border Guards carried automatic weapons. On the evening of the second day they arrived at a ruined village. There were the marks of recent fighting. Bodies of enemy soldiers lay about. In the central part of the village young boys were digging a huge pit. The bodies of scores of Red Army men lay in a heap near by. There were dead horses and broken limbers and shell splinters and broken weapons and many shattered houses. One house was still burning. The *shtrafnaya* company was led to a large building that had been the Communist Party meeting hall before the enemy had used it as a billet. There were orderly heaps of straw on the floor arranged in stalls like a large stable; there were scraps of newspapers printed in German and Rumanian; there were empty bottles with vermouth labels; there were scraps of equipment, belts, part of a pack, one boot. The *shtrafnaya* company began to pick up the scraps of refuse. One man collected the bottles, tipping them to obtain a drop or two of wine; another man found an empty cigarette pack and was ecstatically sniffing the paper; another had found the remnants of a first-aid pouch, some cotton wool, a bandage; another was looking through a heap of disordered maps. While they were exploring the former Fascist billet, a Russian colonel came in and looked at them. He walked quickly to the senior officer. The men saw the officer spring to attention, snapping his heels together, and give a full salute. The colonel said a few words and left. Then there followed a shouting of orders and counterorders such as the men had never heard before. They were driven from their fine quarters and marched to a stockade outside the village. The stockade had been used by the enemy for holding prisoners

of war. But they had had their moment and they talked of this the night through.

In the morning they were marched to a house outside the village and drawn up in a hollow square. It was some moments before the men realized why they had been assembled this way. Then they saw that in the center of the hollow square there were four dead bodies. The bodies were at first unnoticeable having already that community with the earth which the dead quickly obtain. But the men saw that the bodies were nude and that they were the bodies of women. None of the men had seen a female body for a very long time. The bodies had been laid in a row resting on their backs. The men saw that the women's breasts had been cut off with some rough instrument, probably a bayonet, and that they had bled a little. They also saw that the women had been hanged. The political officer stood behind the bodies: in a loud, harsh voice he began declaiming. He said that these were Russian women who had lived in this village. He gave their names. He said that these women were loyal Soviet citizens who had helped the Partisans. When the Fascists were withdrawing from the village they had taken these women and hanged them and mutilated them. The bodies had been found hanging from a roof beam in a barn when the Red Army entered the village. The political officer shouted in a loud declamatory voice after the Russian style; he shouted the nobility and bravery of these women and he shouted the dastardy and the brutality of the Fascist invaders. He spoke the truth.

As he listened Karl looked at one of the dead women. There were several little black flies crawling on her lips. He wanted to brush the flies away and to weep for the woman. It was difficult to tell her age, but it seemed to him that she had been very young and beautiful. Her face was calm and quiet in death. Her face was already shaded. The other women had died in fear and agony, but this younger one had died calmly. The odor of putrefaction was already

in his nostrils. Karl had a sudden passionate hatred for the Fascists: a hatred which was detached from the loud voice of the political officer who was now holding forth on the treachery of the double-dealing Fascists. Karl's anger was against the men who had committed this crime. He raised his eyes and glanced along the line of men with whom he was standing. None of the men was looking at the corpses; but all had an expression of immovable determination, a passionate hatred withdrawn behind their eyes, disciplined, savage; on every face, on every hollow-cheeked face, there was stamped the will to avenge this deed.

They were given ammunition that day and in single file they were marched to a point south of the village. There were additional officers now and behind them were other units with machine guns.

The engagement was very short. The enemy attacked early the next morning. The attack was preceded by light artillery preparation. In the first light of the day the enemy infantry, supported by several light tanks, began to move. Their objective was a low eminence held by the *shtrafnaya* company. The *shtrafnaya* company fought madly to hold its advantage; but it was a series of individual battles rather than the concerted effort of a company of trained men. Two battalions of the Red Army, equipped with heavy weapons, which were acting as divisional support in the rear of the *shtrafnaya* company, did not betray their presence. The men of the *shtrafnaya* company therefore, were without the support of artillery, or heavy fire of any kind, but not being experienced soldiers they did not know this. They were kept together in small sections, under the close observation of their officers, but occasionally a man would leap to his feet and rush crazily into the enemy's fire. Seldom did he reach the enemy lines before being cut down. But the madness of these attacks caused the enemy to hesitate. The enemy soldiers wore brownish uniforms and tall conical sheepskin hats. They were Rumanians. The Rumanian commanders

did not expose their peasant soldiers to unnecessary moral strain.

By nightfall all but a remnant of the *shtrafnaya* company had been destroyed. Karl and his Ukrainian comrade, Pavlenko, who had remained together, were among the surviving remnant, mainly because they had fought wisely, keeping good cover, avoiding unequal combat. But now at nightfall, in the company of one of their officers, they withdrew, exhausted and disheartened, taking shelter in a peasant hut. The officer carried an automatic rifle which he mounted in a window of the hut. At intervals he would fire a few rounds in the general direction of the enemy. It was necessary, he said, to warn the enemy that the resistance had not broken. The officer became weary soon afterward and ordered Karl and Pavlenko to take turns standing by the rifle. He showed them how to operate the weapon. While Pavlenko stood guard Karl lay on the floor of the hut resting. Now in the night and the quietness after battle his heart was burdened with despair. Here in a futile clash of arms he had expended all his hatred, all the feeling which had sustained him during the terrible months of imprisonment. Here was the end of his planning. All the thought which had twisted and turned in his mind with such brilliance and hope here came to nothing. He had not the courage to accept death without an heroic image: that was his weakness. And tomorrow, with certainty, there would be death.

He did not remember hearing the explosion. All he remembered was recovering his consciousness, stunned and hurt, and hearing the officer screaming. The explosion, whatever it was, had set fire to some straw in the hut and by this light he saw that the gentle Pavlenko was dead. There was a bloody cavity in the back of the officer's head and he was screaming. Karl could not do anything for a moment, then he tried to speak to the officer. But the officer was screaming. Then his screams became curses. He began cursing the Germans, crying that they should be killed, more and more of them killed until none

were left on earth. Then his voice sunk lower and Karl heard him talking about Moscow. "I have the luck to have a pass for Moscow," he said. "I have all the papers. I was going to Moscow tomorrow. And now! Now I shall not go." Soon the officer could not speak any more and in a short time he was dead.

KOPCHICK

Comrade Kopchick peered through the thick glass of his pince-nez and for a moment his expression was benign. But then the woman sitting opposite him saw that the benignity was an accident caused by the distortion of the lenses and a tightening of the pale coarse-skinned face. The eyes behind the pince-nez were more protuberant than usual and their customary darting movement had ceased and they were fixed in a hard stare which, behind the glass, seemed far away and detached. The thin red lips were slightly parted from some pressure of nervousness and concentration and not in a smile. The stiff cowlick of hair stood upright off the pale forehead. The woman saw all this and was terrified.

Comrade Kopchick held her report in his hand.

"What is this?" he said. He spoke very quietly.

She did not answer.

"What is this?" he repeated. As he spoke the pages of the report folded and buckled in his hand as the pressure of his grip increased.

"Why have you brought me this rubbish?" he said. "What do you think you are doing? Are you having a game with me? Is it that you are making a joke of me?"

The woman opposite him shook her head. She could not speak. The tone of Comrade Kopchick's voice and the calculation of his acting could mean only one thing: disaster.

"Then what is this!" Kopchick suddenly shouted. "What do you think you're doing!"

The pages of the report suddenly fluttered to the floor.

Comrade Kopchick half turned in his chair. His myopic eyes were cast in the direction of the huge portrait on the wall of his office. He could not see the portrait clearly. The woman knew that he was looking at the portrait, but she did not look in that direction. She had seen similar portraits, many of them, all of the same sitter. Comrade Kopchick began talking. He was talking quietly as though to himself.

"They get lazy," he said. "They forget their duties to the Fatherland. They weaken to bourgeois influences. The foreign corruption surrounds them. They lack the true quality of the Soviet citizen. It becomes necessary to purge them of these influences."

"Oh, no, no . . ."

"Then what is this!" Kopchick turned suddenly. "You see this foreigner every day. Yet, you know nothing of his movements. You fail to observe that he has made contact with certain elements." Kopchick suddenly lowered his voice. Now he was smiling. His smile was saturnine. "Is it possible that you have aided the foreigner?"

"No, no . . ."

"Then why have you failed to report how the foreigner obtained a copy of the children's book, *Tarakanishche,* by the former Czarist author Chukovsky? You did not know that he had this book? How did you fail to know this? Here, under your nose, the foreigner has been conducting a counter-revolutionary conspiracy, and you fail to observe it! Here is a plot to contaminate the minds of our Soviet children! Here is a secret organization . . ."

Kopchick was screaming. His own private terror was released. His imaginative enlargement of the situation took hold

of him, each new possibility sharpened his fear. The dusty desk with its vase of pens and pencils like petrified flowers shook to his shrill voice. But his voice was without echo, the padded doors and the voice-proofed windows held the sound, enfeebled it, located it, as though the room were a radio studio and Kopchick a gesticulating comedian.

Suddenly Kopchick stopped short. He remembered himself. He caught his breath. Then he spoke more quietly.

"Udanova," he said. "Udanova. Where did she come from? Who brought her in? Speaks a foreign language. Perhaps she was here in the time of Comrade Yzhov?"

"Oh, no, no, no . . ."

"Nevertheless in 1937 you were sent away, were you not?"

"It was a mistake. I was released."

"It was a mistake?"

"Oh no . . . yes . . ."

"In 1937 you were sent away because of lack of vigilance. Your vigilance has not increased."

Madame Udanova's head was held low. She could say no more. She would have liked to weep.

"Go. You will hear."

Madame Udanova went.

FERGUSON

I had expected to find Vitalia waiting for me when I returned to the *pribavka,* but she was not there. I spent an impatient hour waiting for her and then it was midnight and I knew she would not come after the curfew. I went down to

Charlie Sommers' room. He was lying in bed reading and smoking a cigarette. He was full of enthusiasm for the book he was reading. It was a detective story. He said he had stolen it from Colonel Dale. He was delighted because it was a relatively new detective story for Moscow, that is, it was about '39 vintage. The idea was a new one. The author was using psychoanalysis to detect the criminal. Charlie said it was a good idea because it enabled the author to introduce some sex dirt as well as crime. He went on talking for a while and then he noticed I was restless and bored.

"Wish I could offer you a drink," he said, "but I haven't a thing."

"That's all right," I said. "I've finished up my vodka ration too."

"Lonely for your little chum?" Charlie said. He grinned amiably.

"I suppose that's what it is," I said.

"Funny how it gets you," Charlie said.

"As a matter of fact she promised to come here tonight, but she hasn't come," I said.

Charlie laughed. "Got to get used to trifles like that," he said. Then he looked at me with a new expression.

"Don't tell me you're really in love with her," he said.

"No," I said. "Nonsense. What is this being in love anyway."

Charlie looked at me closely. "I believe I see the signs," he said. "Yes, whenever I hear anybody say, 'What's this thing love, anyway,' I am always sure they are in love."

"Don't talk rot," I said.

"This is serious," Charlie said. He thought for a moment. "Well," he said, "you've lots of time to get over it. That's the main thing. Lots of time. That's what you've got here. Then it'll cure itself. But you're a queer type, Jimmy my lad. You never know about these queer types. Sometimes takes years, even marriage to cure them."

"Oh, shut up, Charlie."

"Then you'll have to look after the little friend. They'll get very interested you know. I find they have an insatiable curiosity about the decadent practices of the corrupt capitalists."

"Jesus, Charlie . . ."

"Sorry, old boy. But, seriously, watch your step. I've heard tell that up in Murmansk old Admiral Thingamy keeps his girl locked up in a special room in the Naval office. Never allows any Russians near the place for fear they'll kidnap her and send her off to some logging camp. They have some nice logging camps up there."

"I hadn't heard that one," I said. "Do you suggest they do nothing about it?"

"The Admiral is a tough old boy. He would kick up merry hell if they busted in on his diplomatic property. I suppose it's too small a thing to go before the higherups and the local bloke doesn't want to be sent to Kazakstan for acting on his own initiative."

"And he gets away with it? He keeps her on diplomatic ground?"

"Yes, but God knows what will happen to the poor little dear when the old Admiral is called back to his ever-loving wife in England."

'What happens to the girls who marry foreigners?"

"Marry! My God, old boy, what are you talking about?" Charlie sat up in bed.

"No, no," I said. "I'm not going to get married. Don't get excited."

"Well, you know what happens under the diplomatic code. *You* have to leave Russia immediately. Yes, it is the rule. As soon as the fellows marry local girls they are recalled. I was just getting a little alarmed, old boy, in case you were getting out before me. You know I'm next on the list."

"Don't worry yourself. I know about that. But what happens to the girls?"

"The girls? Oh, it doesn't seem to affect their status. I notice they hang about for a while. Depends on whether they pick up

with some other foreigner. I suppose they suffer the usual fate. One thing is certain they never get out of the Soviet Union."

"What about Mathers and Schwartz?"

"Special cases. Ambassadors made special requests. That isn't enough either. They had to pick their time. Had to wait for the signing of some pact or other. Just now, I should say, with all this propaganda about the second front, couldn't be a worse time. In any case they have hostages for a Mathers' wife. She had a mother and a child by a former marriage still here."

I left Charlie to his detective story.

I did not know quite what to do. It was impossible to sleep. Then I remembered the children's story which had amused Vitalia so much. I knew then that it was this that I was worried about. She had promised to bring the book back after showing it to her friends. There was nothing in the book, no name on it to reveal its ownership, but I could not help feeling apprehensive about letting it out of my hands. And now she herself had failed to keep an appointment.

It came upon me suddenly that the drawings in Chukovsky's little book had been the original pattern for Lizavetta's toy animals. Of course, that is where she had copied the animals. Where else? Where else would she have found such playful, charming animals?

Remembering this did not decrease my feeling of guilt or anxiety about the book.

The scenario was still there in the envelope. I took it up and tried to read it. I could manage printed Russian without a great deal of difficulty, but Russian longhand was too much for me. The paper was of the poorest quality and the handwriting hurried. Taking my bedside dictionary I tried to follow the development of the scenario. I saw at once that there was a good deal more to it than an amplification of the children's story. I do not know much about the writing of a film play and I guessed that Karl's method was not strictly Hollywood or, for that matter Eisenstein. But there was the material here for an immense macabre fantasy; but for a Doré rather than a

Disney. Ah, if Doré were animate and animating! There was a lot of horrifying business about leagues of cockroaches lurking in rotting woodwork and old cracks; there was a march of cockroaches; and a cockroach banquet. The condition of the animals became pitiful. There was the lion weeping as he confessed his mistakes; there was the dormouse and the rabbit and the opossum all busy reading *Pravda* and repeating the editorials by memory. In the background there was the shadow of huge cages and treadmills as of a cruel menagerie. And as the tale progressed the animals became thinner, more distressed, more sullen. Then as it seemed they were about to revolt they were involved in a vast war with the inhabitants of a neighboring jungle who invaded their feeding grounds and stole their food and all their pent-up anger and resentment was expended in a savage fight for existence all the more bitter because of their suppressed anger. And from this war the cockroach Boss learned a new trick: skilfully, with all the means at his command, he led the animals to believe that all the world was against them, that the inhabitants of all the jungles were merely waiting to attack them, to pull them down and to destroy their unique system; the cockroach Boss even provoking disturbances and hatred in the world outside so that he could report it to his subjects in order to persuade them to submit to further discipline and the manifold indignities of his regime. But in this horrible, sub-human world there began to flourish an idea. The cockroach Boss had done everything he could to extinguish this idea; but it was older than he and went deep into the history of his country. And this idea was that if life was so contemptible and so worthless as it was under his dictatorship then there was no point in continuing to live. In the war men were throwing their lives away with feckless ardor; it was called patriotism, but many knew better. Why not dispose of one's life in other ways? This was the idea which began to penetrate the minds of the more noble animals. But it did not take the form of mass suicide, because

it was not a suicidal country, it took the form of riot and bloodshed and assassination.

I found it hard to follow the sequences. But I was saddened to see that Mr. Sparrow who so happily ended the story in the slim volume by Chukovsky suffered a different fate in the scenario. In Karl's story the Sparrow was torn to pieces by the furious animals after he had snapped up the cockroach and it was not until another cockroach was on the throne that the animals sadly realized what they had done. There was some indication, however, that the second cockroach Boss, benefiting by experience, behaved with more caution.

There was much more to the scenario than I was able to translate. The author evidently had a peculiar imagination. There was a kind of genius about him, that notable Russian genius which one associates closely with insanity. Or, perhaps, like Dostoievsky he had suffered some terrible experience. How was one to know? Well, God knows what I would do with the scenario. I could get one of the newspaper correspondents to place it with some literary agent who would send it to Hollywood or Elstree or some such place. But then it would have to be translated. Well, it was something to think about.

I must have fallen asleep. I dreamed a good deal and no doubt the dream-work was concerned with the scenario. I believe I dreamed that a cockroach was biting Vitalia, to my shame! It was warm by the stove and once when I surfaced to consciousness I debated for a moment whether I should put out the light and go to bed, but before I made up my mind I was asleep again.

When I woke up finally it was morning although the curtains had not been drawn. I was stiff and weary and I kicked my shoes off and lay on my bed. I pulled the thick eiderdown over me and soon I was asleep again.

I woke up an hour later. I undressed and took a bath. The old Russian servant brought in breakfast. I was not sure what to do. There was no point in going out to look for Vitalia. I would have to wait for her here.

I expected Madame Udanova to come at eleven as usual, but she failed to appear and this put me in a state of further anxiety, although there was no reason for it. I walked over to the window a dozen times and looked out. The scene was always the same. There had been snow during the night and everything had a fresh look. The thermometer outside my window registered 45° below. I noted the temperature level each time I walked to the window. I thought perhaps Charlie would come up, but he did not appear. I guessed that he was down at the Legation. I went into the rear quarters of the *pribavka* to order the old servant to prepare some lunch, but he had gone out somewhere. I went back to my room and fiddled with some reports I had to write, but it was impossible to work. I was seized by some inexplicable restlessness. I put it down to the gloomy evening in the little room, the news about the woman who had been put under prophylactic arrest, my feeling of guilt about letting *Tarakanishche* out of my hands even for a night, to a score of reasons, but I knew that it was due to the absence of Vitalia. I knew that nothing would have prevented her coming unless it were something very serious. I imagined for a moment that perhaps she had left it too late—and I remembered how she had been late for the theater the evening before—and may have got into trouble with the *militsia*. But I knew that this was unlikely.

I walked up and down my room in the empty *pribavka* and worried about Vitalia in a way that I never had thought I could worry.

It was later in the afternoon when I thought I heard the front door open and close. I listened and then I heard light footsteps slowly coming up the stairs and on to the landing. I moved toward the door when it was pushed slowly open and there she was.

"Vitalia!" I cried.

I went to her and kissed her, put my arm around her. Her body was lax. She did not return my kiss and then she kissed

me very gently. It was a gentle kiss unlike the hard voluptuous kisses I had known.

"What has happened? Tell me," I said.

I knew that something had happened. She did not answer. She went over to my bed and slumped down on it. I remembered how she had sat on my bed the first night she had come to my room. But now there was no provocation. The Vamp had vanished; instead there was a sullen hatred clouding her young face; her lips were parted and her hazel eyes burned. Her body was flung back in a pose which was at once defiant and full of despair. I went to her.

"Tell me," I said. "What has happened?"

She looked at me closely. She looked carefully at me. It was a steady look such as she had never given me before. I waited for her to speak.

"You are good? Zhimmy," she said.

"What is it?" I said.

"Nothing," she said. *"Nichevo."*

I saw the indifference come into her eyes: the indifference with which they temper feeling. Then she smiled and her smile had some quality of abandonment, a recklessness.

"What have they done to you?"

She looked at me again in the new way and suddenly she took my head and kissed me. She kissed me again and again. She put her arm around me and she held me in a strong grasp. All the time she was laughing in a reckless, excited way.

"Have they hurt you?" I said.

She looked at me, startled. Then she laughed again. She put her hand into her dress and took out a piece of paper. She held it out to me.

"It is nothing," she said.

I looked at the paper. I could not quite decipher the words. I reached for my dictionary. While I hurriedly looked up the words Vitalia was laughing. The paper was an order banishing Vitalia from Moscow for life. She was to go to a *kolkhoz* somewhere on the Volga.

"They are sending you away?" I said.

"Da."

"Why? What is the matter with them? What have you done?"

Vitalia frowned again. The expression of sullen hatred returned. I did not expect her to tell me. Then she began to speak.

"It is good there is big plot. I like plot. Kill all *En-kay-vay-day.*"

"What is this about a plot?"

Vitalia looked at me. "Your plot. You have plot, no?"

"I haven't got a plot," I said. "What is all this nonsense?"

"You have nothing plot?"

"No," I said.

"True, Zhimmy. No plot?"

"No, no, no." I said. "Get this damned criminal romanticism out of your head."

Suddenly Vitalia began laughing. She laughed for fully a minute. I had difficulty trying to restrain her. Then she stopped laughing, looked at me, and began laughing again. I did not laugh. I was impatient to know what it was all about.

"Zhimmy have nothing plot?"

"What else did they say?" I said.

"They say I bad Soviet womans. I not know you have plot for propaganda."

"What's this!"

"Yes, *En-kay-vay-day* say to plot imperialist propaganda."

"It's fantastic."

"Vitalia make big mistake. I not tell them and they very angry."

I thought for a minute. "But what's all this about a plot?"

"Oh yes, a big plot. I spend all night in isolator because of plot."

"You've been in prison!"

"All night. It is nothing. Nice bed, but very cold. Light is

on all time but no heat. I not allowed put hands under blanket. Must show hands. Guard looks at me every half-hour. Makes noise so I not sleep."

"Is that all that happened?"

"It is nothing. They want to know everything about *us*. I tell them they fornicate their mothers. I say I much love you. They very angry. *En-kay-vay-day* very angry with Vitalia. But Vitalia not care. I say fornicate *En-kay-vay-day*."

She used the popular colloquial term for fornicate.

"So they banished you?"

"Yes."

"Are you going to run away?"

"Zhimmy, you are silly. In Russia no ones runs away."

"When do they say you have to go?"

"Tonight."

"No. Not tonight."

"Yes, there is train."

"You don't have to take it. Listen, Vitalia, you can stay here. They daren't do anything on diplomatic property. I shall do something." I looked at the slip of paper ordering her banishment. "This man who signed it. Who is he? I'll write to him. I'll demand an interview. They can't do this to you just because you've slept with me. Besides I must clear up this nonsense about a plot. I can't let it go like that."

Vitalia sat on the bed. She was serious now. The sullen expression was there again.

"Then they shoot me."

"Shoot you!"

"Yes. They not like counter-revolution."

"That's ridiculous," I said.

I put my arm around her and kissed her. "Listen," I said, "we'll get married."

"No difference. Just same *kolkhoz*."

"No," I said. "We'll have diplomatic protection. They daren't do anything to you then."

As I said it I knew it to be false. My mind was in confusion. I did not know what to do. Vitalia saw my confusion and she began kissing me tenderly.

"Not worry, Zhimmy," she said. "Not worry."

She drew my head down and held me against her throat and breast. I was kissing the firm line of her throat. I felt the warmth of her body and all the young sensuality stirring toward me.

Suddenly I lifted my head. Something had occurred to me.

"Vitalia," I said, "where is it?"

"*Sto?*"

"*Tarakanishche.* Where is the little book?"

Vitalia dropped her hands. She did not look at me.

"You gave it to them?"

She nodded. I did not know what to say.

"You angry with Vitalia?"

"No," I said. "No. What does a little thing like that matter. There was nothing in it. It's of no consequence beside your problem. It's you I'm thinking of."

"They say you have book from anti-soviet elements. They say you have plot with anti-soviet elements."

I looked at Vitalia. The words were a sudden shock.

"Anti-soviet elements?" I said. "Is it guesswork?"

Vitalia shook her head. "They know Zhimmy. I say you have plot, but you not believe."

"My God," I said, "this is different.

I stood up. I was thinking about Lizavetta and Rachel. How could I have forgotten them in this thing. Someone was informing on them. They were in great danger.

"Listen, Vitalia, stay here. Yes, stay here. Don't go out, don't move. I am going to my friends. The friends who gave me the little book. Yes, I must tell them at once. But you must not go away from here."

Vitalia looked downcast.

"You go Zhimmy?" she said.

"Yes, I must," I said. "I must warn them."

Vitalia looked down, away from me, her long dark lashes covering her eyes. I had never noticed before how long her lashes were. The sadness and the despair which had been concealed beneath her attitude of petulant defiance was now fully exposed. At that moment I was sure I loved her.

"Stay here," I said. "Don't move. You are safe here. I shall be back in half an hour."

I put on my coat and cap. I kissed her.

"*Do Svidanya* Zhimmy," she said.

"Not *Do Svidanya,*" I said. "I shall be back."

"*Do Svidanya.*"

MARY ANDERSON

Our house superintendent is a very kind woman. Although she loves to gossip she has a good heart. I regret that I have not cultivated her acquaintance before. I would have been much easier in mind and understood many more things had I done so. Our house superintendent has a very difficult task, because, not only has she to collect money from the residents and see that they keep the streets in front of the house clear of ice and to guard against illegal fires and a hundred other things, but she also has to keep a close watch on the people living here because there are many irresponsible elements in the community these days. She is afraid of thieves and murderers and every night she locks herself inside her own room on the ground floor. She is the only one who can do this, no one else is allowed to lock themselves in, because locks are illegal. But thieves and murderers are one thing; she is more worried about subversive political elements. There are so many strange

people in oscow, refugees and soldiers of the nationalities, that one ca rust no one. She has been warned about this, but, of course, e cannot always be on the watch, especially when she is so ch afraid at night, and must have coöperation. Our house perintendent is, naturally, a Party member and must show e greatest vigilance, not only on her own account, but also on count of her relatives, one of whom is very high in the *Narkomindel*. If there should be spies or oppositionists harboring in er house she would have to answer for it and, of course, all r family would be affected. She had been talking to me abo this and I am very sympathetic. Of course, I can help her.

I can see now how wrong it is even to listen to talk like I have been hearing lately. It is hysterical talk, it doesn't mean anything, but it is bad. It creates an atmosphere of unrest. At the present moment, the way things are, it is wrong to talk a foreign language. I knew it was wrong, and I would never have listened, only I did so much want to hear English spoken again, being so lonely and without anyone to talk to, and I was corrupted by the idea that the foreigner would help me. Oh, how I hate them, those complacent foreigners! As if they would do anything for you! Didn't I learn my lesson a year ago. It is wrong for those foreigners to come anywhere near us and I am glad that I took my courage in my hands and made sure that he would not come again. The very presence of foreigners corrupts us. And, of course, they are always looking for weaknesses in our system, plotting against us, attempting to destroy us. I am not so innocent but that I remember how they attacked Robert when he was a member of the Party in New York, what lies they printed in their newspapers, what brutalities their police committed, what ruthless persecution they championed in their Congress. I am not deceived about their capitalism, because I have had experience of it and I know how bad it can be; and it is because I understand the language that I know what they are plotting and can guard against it.

I am glad that I am on such friendly terms with our house superintendent. She explains so many things to me. Of course, I knew about these things, but now I see everything so much more clearly. I am beginning to remember all the discussions Robert used to make. It is strange how I remember them, because at the time I used to be as quiet as a mouse. I never used to join in the discussions and I don't remember that I was very interested at the time. But now I remember what they were all about and I know where Robert was wrong. Of course, men are stubborn about ideas and will never yield to practical common sense. Robert was always too much of an idealist. You cannot expect people to live and work for ideals all the time. I can see now why the Party has to be so firm with the people. The Russians are so impressionable and inconstant. Look at Rachel. As soon as this foreigner comes she can't say enough against the System. Just to impress him. I can see that it is true that the more liberty they are given the more they are likely to abuse it. And they are such terrible time-wasters. If the Party weren't so severe with them they would spend all their time talking and get into awful muddles. Then how would they carry out five-year plans or win wars? It was only because the Party introduced such heavy penalties for being late to work that they have got their factories working. Look at all the embezzlements which go on in the Commissariats: it simply proves you must be hard with them or you can never get anything out of them. How could the workers themselves run the factories? They simply had to have trained Party members and the Special Department. I understand all this much better now than before because I can see that when the Russians are dissatisfied they will stop at nothing. There is no such thing as compromise with them. It is because they are like children. Everybody has always said they are like children. They see everything as black and white, good and bad. And if it is bad, why they want to destroy it immediately. That is why an Opposition would be terribly dangerous in Russia. In the first place you would not be able

to trust them: they would be secretly plotting all the time against you and you could never be sure they would not murder you in your bed because they would believe in themselves so fanatically that anything they did would be justified. In the second place an Opposition would confuse everybody: instead of having a straightforward policy which everyone could believe in there would be opposing policies and the masses would not know what to do. It all goes to prove that you must have discipline. You must have a monolithic society. I am terribly excited about the word "monolithic." I had not heard it before and it is my own translation. But it expresses everything I need.

I am so grateful to our house superintendent. I like to talk to her very much. She says that I need not worry about a new room, because she will soon have an ideal small room for me. She says not to worry about the children either, that she knows a way to avoid having them taken for Trade Schools. I was surprised to hear her speak so frankly and it made me more than ever friendly toward her. She says that the Trade Schools are only for the proletariat. She says that she has noticed that the children are exceptionally intelligent and that they should become Pioneers and then Komsomols and that then they can go to a special school. She knows about such things through her relative at the *Narkomindel*. She asked me whether the children spoke English and I was terribly afraid for a moment. But I said yes, they could. Then she said there would be great need for young Soviet men who could speak English like the English or the Americans. But she warned me that I might not see much of them if they are sent to a special school because they would work very hard. But I said that that didn't matter so long as they were well cared-for.

So now I am almost happy. I regret nothing that I have done.

I walked hurriedly across the Mokhovaya. I debated for a moment whether it would be quicker to go by Metro, but, remembering the crowds at this hour, I decided it was better to walk. It was approaching evening. The ravens were coming home to the Kremlin. They flew in a black cloud over the old city and the sharp evening air was full of their noise. The snow on the rooftops was everywhere packed many feet thick and you could see the new layers against the old like the stratification in a geological specimen. People were hurrying home. Some pulled little carts behind them. The carts were neatly stacked with sticks of wood. There was a woman pushing a baby-carriage mounted on runners. I saw Mr. Ehrenberg taking the air in his sable coat and round fur cap with his Cairn terrier on a scarlet leash. There were husky soldiers in fleece-lined jackets and felt boots striding along. The trolley cars were packed with home-goers, jammed tight like bunches of grapes at the moment before the press closes on them. Automobiles sped by at high speeds. A big mechanical snow sweeper was at work at one place. Old people in seedy threadbare coats, hunched up against the cold, shawls over their heads, walked by without looking to left or right. Small boys, gloveless hands thrust into their pockets, played at being tankists. Some young women, wearing ski trousers underneath their skirts, sauntered arm-in-arm. The bread shop was putting up its shutters and the crowd was dispersing slowly, resignedly. I walked quickly and at length I came to the Pushkin statue and then I turned down the Tverskoi boulevard. There were

fewer people here and a number of beggars stood against the walls. When I said, "No," in English they shrank back. I walked on and soon I came to the Gogol statue. Here I turned right and I was soon in the big street I had walked down five or six evenings previously. It was a straight, level street. The heavy falls of snow since I had last come that way had altered its aspect, but I was sure I was on the right track. Some of the buildings were oddities as I remembered them. But the new side of the street was in full sight now and this confused me a little. There were buildings which I should have remembered, having passed by there so recently, but which I did not remember. After walking some distance I thought I had come too far and I went back over my steps. Then I thought I saw the house. I went over to it and entered. There was a *militsia* there and I saw that the building was some kind of institution and that I had been wrong in thinking I had recognized it. The guard looked at me and I turned around and went out. I walked on hurriedly. A few yards down the street I glanced back and I saw that the *militsia* had come out of the building and was looking at me. I walked on. I had no doubt that I had miscalculated the location of the apartment building. But the encounter with the *militsia* had put a new thought into my head. Suppose I arrived there too late? Suppose they got there before me? I would then walk right into them. Well, that would be a good thing. It would force a show-down. I had now gone a considerable distance down the street and its appearance had changed entirely. I was certain the apartment house was not in this vicinity. I walked back to where I had seen the *militsia*. I decided that I would be better able to recognize the building from its back entrance. I turned down a small side street and looked about. But it was no use. Every building looked like the one I had entered with Mitka and yet none was exactly like it. I had to admit I was lost. It was now dark and there was no hope of finding the place in the dark.

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Just then I saw the building. Yes, there was the ornate entrance with the fretwork mouldings. I went over to the doorway and pushed one panel back. I stepped inside. It smelled of damp and *mahorka* and resinous pinewood. It was dark. I waited for my eyes to become suited to the gloom. Then I saw that it was not the place. There was no little passage leading off to the right. It was as if the little room and all its occupants had not existed. As far as I was concerned they might have been walled up. Masons may have come and bricked up the entrance to the little passage and spread over the bricks this evil distemper. I looked at the wall. I put out my hand to test its firmness. Then I knew that indeed I was lost. I went outside and now night had fallen. I had difficulty finding my way back to the Tverskoi boulevard and it was some time before I reached the Legation. I resolved to look for the place again next day. I would certainly be able to find it in the daylight with plenty of time to hunt about.

I remembered suddenly that Vitalia was waiting for me. I went up to my room, but she was not there. I went out on to the landing and ran down the stairs to Charlie Sommers' room. I thought perhaps she had gone there for company.

Charlie was dressing for a party. Vitalia was not there.

"Have you seen Vitalia?" I said.

"No," Charlie said, swinging around, "but have you heard the news?"

"No," I said, "but I must find Vitalia. It's urgent."

"You haven't heard the news! What a pleasure. Here's one man I can tell."

"Oh God," I said, "where can she have gone?"

"I say, old boy, you are in a state, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am. Where can I find her!"

"Never mind. You'll cheer up when you hear the news. My boy, we've landed."

"What?"

"This morning at dawn. Yes, in the old tradition. The

British and the Americans landed in North Africa this morning. From Algiers to Casablanca. Smithy called me up. It's terrific. It's the second front!"

"Yes," I said, "they've landed, eh?"

"The British Embassy confirmed it. What's so good about it is that it spiked his damned speech. He's had to write it all over again."

"What speech? What is it?"

"Why, *His* Anniversary-of-the-Revolution speech. He was going to blast us for not making the second front we promised."

"Oh, yes, it's today, isn't it?"

"You don't seem very enthusiastic, I must say."

"No," I said. "Have you seen her at all?"

"Who? Oh, your little chum. No, I haven't seen her, old boy."

"My God, now what'll I do."

"What's the matter with you? You ought to be overjoyed. It changes our whole position here. From now on everything becomes easier. You can even get married and get your wife out. No, perhaps not that good. What's the matter? Have you taken a beating from the Old Man? Is that it? What did he have to say anyhow?"

"What did who have to say? I don't know what you're talking about."

"Didn't you get his message?"

"No. Whose message?"

"Why, the Minister's message. Our Minister's message."

"No."

"But, old boy, he's been looking for you all afternoon. In a black rage too. Molotov or Vyshinsky or somebody called him over today and gave him a wigging about you. I thought that was what was worrying you. I say, old boy, go and see him at once. Calm the beast in his lair. Whatever have you been up to? I must say you seem to have got yourself into a mess this time."

"Stop babbling. I understand the Minister wants to see me. Is that it?"

"Babbling, now that's not a nice word, old boy. On such an occasion too. Yes, he wants to see you. Immensely important. At once! You seem to have caused an awful lot of trouble."

"All right, I'll see him now."

"Come over to Smithy's afterward. He's having a party to celebrate the landing."

"If you should see . . ."

"Your little chum? Yes, of course, I'll delay her, old boy."

I left Sommers. I walked out into the cold air. I walked toward the Legation building. My mind was overwhelmed with a sense of guilt, but it was not for any embarrassment I might have caused a Minister.

KARL IVANOVICH

He sat by the window watching the roadway. It was after the curfew hour and the roadway was silent and deserted. He thought this night would be *the* night because it was the anniversary of the Revolution. It was fitting that it should be tonight, a quarter of a century after those who were now dead had made the Revolution. He had planned it this way. After the feasting in the Kremlin they would want women and they would go to their *dachas* at some early hour of the morning. Their limousines would come down the Route, traveling fast, but still cautious of the ice, and they would be preceded and followed by the automobiles of the guards. He

thought he knew now which automobile to look for: he knew now the shape of the big Packard with the blue-tinted windows and the black roof-top. He did not know that the blue-tinted windows were bullet-proof or that the roof was made of armor plate. He saw himself taking aim at the car and, with the direct fire of his automatic rifle, killing the driver and the occupants, and bringing the car swerving and crashing to a halt. Then, if there were survivors, and if they attempted to crawl out of the wreck, he would use his hand grenades. It would be simple, as simple as a sparrow snapping up a cockroach. But he would make quite sure that the work was complete. He would drop down on to the road and he would throw what hand grenades he had left and, as the guards came running with their weapons, he would fire with his rifle until the magazine was exhausted and they had killed him.

This night he felt stronger in his purpose than at any time before. He did not notice the cold. His hands were hot, but they were steady. He was not nervous. He held the cold breech and the trigger guard of his rifle. It was necessary to keep the rifle from freezing for then it would jam at the great moment. His finger moved the safety-catch forward. It moved easily. The rifle was cocked. All that was needed was a cool aim and the faintest pressure of his finger and the act would be accomplished. He knew how the rifle would leap in his hands and he knew how to compensate for this; he knew that the curved magazine contained thirty-six rounds; he knew that he would fire in short bursts of six or eight rounds so that the barrel would not become too hot for him to hold; he knew that the slightest pressure of the finger would be all that was required to do this. He thought that it would take all of the thirty-six rounds to stop the Packard. If the automobile were halted before that he would still empty the magazine. Then he would throw the grenades. He would clip on his second magazine and he would leap to the ground and conclude the battle.

Now that he saw it all before him he felt sure and certain. There had been a moment when he had weakened. When he

had come into the little room where his mother lived with Lizavetta, coming there at a time when he knew he could do so without being observed by the house superintendent, coming fresh from the bath-house, clean but conscious of the filth of his clothes, he had suddenly felt weak, physically weak and with a failing purpose. He had stood at the doorway. The familiar scene, the photographs on the wall, the sofa, the little stove, the spinsterish neatness of the room, had almost brought him to weeping. His mother had cried out. And he knew now that he had been like an apparition from across the grave: the shaven bony head, the deep hollows in the cheeks, the thin neck, the wild glowing eyes. His mother had cried out and then she had wept hysterically. It was Lizavetta who had welcomed him, weeping a little, but brushing away her tears, holding him against her firm roundness, kissing him on the cheeks. And together they had calmed his mother. And then his mother had fallen to sobbing on his shoulder and it had been a long time before she had been able to hold him away from her and to look at his poor emaciation and then to weep again. "This is what they have done to you. Oh, my son, my son," she had cried. But in a little while she had recovered. He had seen with satisfaction that as soon as she had felt again the deep smouldering resentment which had always been her strength she had become normal again. Anger sustained her. He had thought that there would be much to talk about, many explanations, but there was very little. He could not talk of experiences as a prisoner and they did not question him; his appearance and his state of mind were eloquent enough. His father's name was not mentioned so that he had known that there was no news and that was all he could have expected. Then his mother had noticed his uniform and he had seen the terror come into her eyes. It was the uniform of the N.K.V.D. Border Guards. He had quieted her, but Lizavetta had understood at once that there was the problem of concealment. They had pondered on the problem. They had considered hiding him there in his mother's room. But he had found reasons why that was impracticable. Then he had

asked after Mitka. There was Mitka's room. It was a small room, a splinter of a room, cunningly unnoticeable like Mitka himself, but it was a place where he could hide. Then, suddenly, Rachel had known everything! In that second she had divined his purpose, recognized the exaltation in his eyes. For Mitka's room overlooked the Route. She had looked at Karl in awe and then with such an expression of fear that he could not measure it. Seeing this, his heart had faltered; all the strength he had accumulated during his imprisonment, all the power and ruthlessness he had promised himself, all his passion was about to dissolve. He had feared the necessity of talking about his purpose; he had not wanted persuasion; he had not wanted his purpose to come within the area of rationality. And at that moment Rachel had risen, and he had taken her in his arms, and he had kissed her and in her submissiveness there was all that he had needed. Suddenly, without a word being spoken, her attitude had changed; the fear had drained away and there was in its stead a boldness and a nobility. Suddenly she shared his exaltation. Some of his strength of purpose transferred itself to Rachel and he had known that her life had the same meaning; they were both dedicated to history. Their bondage had filled him with joy. He had loved his mother as he had never loved before; it was a new love, such as he might have felt for a young woman, for it was as though they were about to step together across the threshold of life; only it was not life, but death; and this, somehow, made them happier, younger, more madly in love.

Lizavetta had found them like that, already conspirators, holding each other's hands, the light shining in their eyes; and Lizavetta with her gentle ways and her toy animals had looked sad. She had hung her head, and she had wept a little, but they were not tears of joy, but of grief. "Oh, my darlings," she had said, "they have done this to you." But then she brightened as was her way and made them tea and cheered them. He had thought she had already guessed his intent. He was afraid of this, because Lizavetta was in the sane world, the reasonable

world, the world which is grateful for being alive, the world of acceptance. But she was also innocent, a child in the world's ways, and to divert her he had teased her about her toy animals which were arranged about the room. And she had soon been laughing gaily. She had brought out Chukovsky's little book and they had gone through the pages again together. It had been from this little book that he had had his first lessons at her knees, so many years ago it seemed, when she was still young and, even then, maternal. They had laughed together over the antics of the animals, had read again the witty verses. And then suddenly the idea had dawned upon him. What foresight had led Chukovsky to write this book. What accuracy of vision had inspired the fable of the cockroach? Here was the model of his action; here, in the ever-living pages of Russian literature, was his justification. He had thought to write down his thinking; but his thinking was fevered and irrational, and who would read another such treatise? But, this was the medium; here was the vehicle for his febrile imagination. A scenario!

He had begun his writing that night. And for night and day thereafter he had worked at it. The excitement of working had delayed him and he had had trouble training his fingers once more to grasp a pencil; but he had done it. The allegory had offered so many variations, so much richness of imagery, so many deep shadows and flashing highlights, so much horror and beauty, that he felt himself inspired. A kind of genius had seized his hand and guided it and when it was done he felt that he had penned a message that would shake the world. And how better to reach the masses than through the cinema!

There had arisen the problem of finding a means of sending his scenario into the world. But Mitka, with his usual resourcefulness, had found a foreigner, a sympathetic man who would do it secretly.

He was joyful about his scenario. The invention had warmed him and strengthened him. He had read it to Rachel each morning as she brought him his bread and tea. She had listened

with pride and love for him. She was rounded and soft and relaxed in his company; fully resigned. She said very little, but with her fingers she smoothed his cheek, touched his hot hands, steadied him. She was not afraid of dying and she was all he had cared about. They would both die.

It was pleasant to think of that moment of death: welcome and releasing. For after the act there would be no time to be alive. First, all those in the apartment building would be taken. Then they would take all those in the street. After that all those in the neighborhood. And the prisons would be crowded again and the interrogators would begin their work informed by hearsay and spurred by terror. They would find the guilty. Oh yes, they would unearth guilt in every quarter, the Russian guilt, the culpability of thought. And there would be so much guilt that suspicion would fall on the Special Department itself (remembering too that the corpse would be in this uniform) and then the search would begin in high places. That would be the ultimate destruction: when guilt was found in every man and the torture and the slaughter swept the country. And by that time his message would have reached the world. This time the world would know. The innocent foreigner would have transmitted his message and the world would know why he had committed this deed: and then from this there would spring the suspicion of a world-wide plot, the fear of counter-revolution and attack from within and without; and all those held in hostage for those abroad would be called in, and then those abroad would be called, and so it would go on. The jails, the prison camps, the labor gangs, the mines and the lumber settlements would be filled to overflowing. The period of benevolence would be over and the time of retribution fast approaching. But he would be above all this; none of this was in his purpose; his act was of the purest kind and what followed from it would be of their making, not his.

This is what he was thinking, now, in the silent night, fingering his automatic rifle, gazing down the length of the Route.

There was the sound of a light step behind him.

He turned swiftly. In the doorway of the small room he saw the shape of a man. In the faint light from the window he saw a short very broad man with short thick arms and a round shaven head set close to his shoulders. The man stood there without moving, without speaking.

"Gregor!"

The man stepped silently into the room. Karl took a swift step backward toward the window.

"Yes, it is Gregor Sokur, your father's friend."

Karl could not speak.

"Ah it is cold here. You have no warmth," Gregor said.

"The window is open," Karl said. He felt suddenly chilled. He stood by the window clasping his rifle with trembling hands, his fingers no longer firm, his cheeks quivering, his eyes wild.

Gregor seated himself on the edge of Mitka's bed.

"An open window on the Route attracts attention," Gregor said.

"Who told you I was here?"

"The rifle is excellent. You have the safety catch forward. Good. Sometimes the catch freezes-up."

"Who else knows? Do They know?"

"Calm yourself. The house superintendent will shortly be disciplined for lack of vigilance."

Gregor began laughing. Karl saw the large shoulders heaving, but heard no sound.

"It is Lizavetta! You have come because of Lizavetta."

"I have come only to talk."

"To talk!"

"It is because I cannot sleep. Always at night I am waiting for Them and They do not come and I cannot sleep. So I talk."

"You have come to dissuade me."

"No, to talk. For a few minutes to talk. Talk is something I have recently learned. Formerly I could not speak; it was not suitable to my work. But now, since I am waiting, I have

learned to talk. It is a new satisfaction. I recommend it. It is better than a drug."

Gregor's words were a shock to Karl. It was a long time since he had heard such speech: sounds that were not the reflex of movement, but which made reason. In the prison camps he had lost the art of talking; he had worked everything out in his head, thesis, antithesis, synthesis had been debated between himself and himself, until his inner voice was the only voice he heard, and there was no exterior rationality, and no threat to his logic from another personality. But now all that fine febrile thinking was threatened from without. The suggestion of speech, of being drawn into a conversation, filled him with an unbearable anxiety. He felt that his mouth would not form the words, there was a weakening in his jaw muscles, the saliva suddenly began issuing from his glands, as on the occasion when he had attempted speech with Pavlenko, but this time it was not hunger, but fear.

"What have you to say, Gregor?" he said.

"Why, it is a natural time for reminiscence. Twenty-five years ago today your father and I and others, now dead, made the Revolution, created the first Workers' State."

"I cannot listen."

"It is easier to believe that it was a Workers' State, because then we can hold the proposition that it has merely degenerated; and there is hope."

Karl began trembling. Gregor's words were like the echo of himself talking. It was an argument which he had gone over and over again in his mind.

"It is easier to believe," Gregor continued, "that the Workers' State has suffered a temporary deterioration in the hands of the incompetent and second-rate. Clearly you believe this or you would not be holding that rifle in your hands."

Karl's fit of trembling ceased. Gregor was wrong. And this certainly brought Karl into the argument though he yet did not speak aloud, but only to himself. You are wrong, Gregor, he said in his mind, wrong to impute motives of correction or

betterment or even of revenge. That is what you Old Bolsheviks cannot see. But he did not say it aloud.

"It is difficult to believe in man; easy to believe in mankind," Gregor said.

"A bourgeois aphorism," Karl said aloud. He was suddenly pleased with himself like a child.

"To believe in mankind is the bourgeois habit of mind," Gregor said. "It is to believe that men are victims of forces greater than themselves which they cannot control, nor always discern, and this leads to a belief in God, or Fate, detaches man from responsibility, delegates power to a priesthood or ruling caste."

Karl listened with apprehension and excitement.

"On the other hand," Gregor went on, "to believe in man is to believe that man can control and organize life, as we believed twenty-five years ago, but this also is to accept the view that history has been the plaything of men, influenced this way or that according to the appetites and illusions of those in power. And that left us with the problem that no system was secure or workable unless it had the proper men to manage it, but that there had been, until then, no sure way of ensuring that such men, and not fools, did manage it, or that the acquisiton of power did not corrupt."

"Always you seek to justify the *En-kay-vay-day,*" Karl said.

"As we planned it the People's safeguard was to have the means—a system within the system—of destroying successively those classes of men who failed them. And this was my sacred function. For almost a quarter of a century my life was devoted to the liquidation of the subversive, the incompetent and the corrupt. I was one of the surgeons of the Workers' State."

A chilling draught entered the partly opened window.

"A college of surgeons," Gregor said slowly, as though in reminiscence, " and our instruments were the knuckle and the knout, the club and the vise, the studded heel and the loaded hose, the soft-nosed bullet in the cortex of the brain. And many were the operations we performed, the limbs breaking,

the bellies broken, the female breasts twisting, the blood and the spittle in the mouth, the spent sperm and the urine flooding. . . ."

It had been one of the characteristics of the Revolution, thought Karl, feeling now superior to Gregor, the sudden flow of pure and shining intellectuality from the incongruous body; ox-like peasant, the ghetto rat, the nomadic shepherd, suddenly liberated, had often exhibited intellectuality of untrammelled brilliance. And Gregor Sokur had been one of these. But now the intellectuality was tarnished, trapped in that vast body and betrayed by it. Karl felt an ascendency over Gregor and this made him very calm.

"It is too late for conscience, Gregor. *He,* too, was a Master Surgeon—the first secretary of the Control Commission."

"Yes."

"Why didn't you kill him?"

"It was not above my function."

"You had it in mind then?"

"It was always in our mind. For him and every other who used power."

"Why didn't you act?"

"His name, like any other's, could have been withdrawn from all committees and public announcements. In six months he would have been forgotten."

"He knew?"

"He has instinct."

"He struck first?"

"He alone struck."

"And now you wait."

"Yes."

"Wait for him to destroy you?"

"With impatience."

"And you talk."

"Yes."

"Why did you not strike first? It was your function."

"Because for a long time, for many years now, I have known

that surgery and medicine do not change the species. We sought to keep the body of the Workers' State healthy by small excisions and applications of physic, but though you cut and cauterize, man's corruption is like a cancer which colonizes again in another limb. The germ of the corruption is in the species."

"Gregor, when did you discover that it was not your ideals which made you a Tchekist, but your character?"

"Long, long ago."

"And with disillusionment came the rationalization and then the irony and finally the cynicism."

"It is said that power corrupts man: I found that the exercise of power requires corrupt men."

"You discovered sophistry."

"And I say to you, Karl, who is embarked on a course of amateur surgery, that though you may kill him Life will sport another like him."

"But beneath all your cynicism you believe?"

"I believe nothing."

"Yes, finally you believe."

"No."

"It is true, you believe still in your Revolutionary ideals. You believe that with all its imperfections and corruption of power this is the Workers' State and that there is no other course."

"No other hope."

"Therefore you believe in *Him*."

"He will kill me."

"You will see him as cynical and as disillusioned as yourself. And there is some enjoyment in this for you. You are amused by and appreciative of the cunning devices he employs to remain in power. Even though they are turned against yourself."

"Amused?"

"Yes, you even share the joke, his joke, that allows you to live on a little longer than you expected."

"I can see the sardonic humor in his eyes now."

"And should he require it you would joke further with him. You would admit your mistakes. You would confess or perform any other absurd antic, because it is all one huge joke."

"I have thought of that."

"All because of the disillusionment and the irony, but also because you believe in the Workers' State, and that even if the sovereign power were invested in you, Gregor Sokur, you could not exercise it in any different way, but only with cynicism, disillusionment and the ruthless cruelty of your trade. Because you believe that this which we have now is the inevitable flow and direction of Life."

Karl was exalted. Now that the words came to his tongue just as he had thought them his excitement was boundless.

"I will tell you something, Gregor," he said. "I too believe."

"You believe in *Him!*"

"I believe he is right because he exists. It is not he that is wrong, but Life. I do not accept your terms, your Party, your Tcheka, your Workers' State, or any of your argument, I believe none of it. Nor do I have disillusionment and the cynicism. But I accept his existence."

"But you would end his existence."

"His existence is incidental and recurrent."

"As I have said."

"It is my own life that I dispose of. I use his life only to give my act the widest publication. That it is *he* and not some other, makes no difference to me. But in the manner of my own death I give to every man the ideal for protesting this life. No longer must man join himself in parties, for that is to contribute to the power and the corruption, nor to join armies, for that is to commit crimes against himself, but he must act individually, independently, using his own life as a weapon. Rather than live his life out in misery and slavery, thus enlarging the power of authority and contributing to the succession of cataclysmic disasters which are overtaking humanity, he should deny the treacherous and primitive urge to live and

sacrifice his few years in an act against authority. It is the only weapon they cannot control and its effect will be incalculable. So that all men may know of this weapon I shall kill *Him* who is the archetype of authority in the world."

As he spoke Karl's eyes were shining with a kind of joyous madness. His bony head, hollow cheeks, thin neck and big eyes were illumined with an unearthly quality.

Gregor saw this. He shifted in his place on the edge of the bed.

"How can you prove," Gregor said, "that it is not a personal satisfaction you will be obtaining by killing him and not another?"

"Only *Him* because all the world will know."

"Do you think that if you are successful, that if your bullets pierce the armor plate and the guards do not immediately kill you, do you think that his death will be made known, that they will make it known any more than I would have made it known?"

The light faded from Karl's eyes.

"Do you think, too, that your plan to inform the world through the medium of the foreign fool who was here will remain unknown to them, is not already frustrated by their workers? You must know that."

Karl began to tremble. The saliva glands began to work again. He could not speak.

"But then," Gregor said, "if you have in mind only the act. the act in its pure form, the using of life, then we are agreed. We are agreed on all things."

Suddenly Karl was afraid. He had been tricked. The Tcheka was here. The presence of Gregor in that room, his urbanity, the flat unaccented voice with the Lettish accent, his great physical strength, his function, his vast knowledge of the intimacies of death that made him like the high priest of some barbaric ritual, all this suddenly embraced and surrounded Karl, dominated him. And this was the Tcheka, the N.K.V.D. Karl suddenly sensed his own weakness, his enfeebled phy-

sique, his tenuous spirit, his fine febrile intelligence now shattered by this venture into objectivity. He had succumbed to talk and now his mind was in confusion and fury.

"How are we agreed?" he said hoarsely.

"That it matters not whether it be this man or that man. Whether it be he or me."

Karl waited for the next trick. There was a trick here. He could not fathom it. He waited in agony.

"You must go Gregor," he said. He spoke urgently, not for the night, but for his own balance.

It was late, many hours after midnight, and the city was silent. The snow made everything quiet and cold rendered the air sharp and hard like a steel rod which, when struck, carries sound in a high vaulting key, traveling away from the listener to invisible altitudes.

Gregor's shoulders were shaking. He was laughing.

"I come to talk," he said, "and we have the dialectic."

"It is Lizavetta who has sent you," Karl said. "But that cannot stop me. I tell you I have thought of the reprisals."

"I do not mention it."

"I have thought of the slaughter and the torture and the imprisonments and I am not to be moved."

"Think of it no more."

"Yes, you would stop me. But I shall not be stopped."

All Karl's fears, his nervousness, anxiety and apprehension, was now projected in vehement hatred of Gregor.

"Nothing will stop you?"

"No."

"Think, Karl. With a single move I could disarm you. With one word I could call the *militsia.*"

Karl moved his rifle upward so that it was balanced across his body with the muzzle toward Gregor.

"Yet, you see, I do not," Gregor said. He began laughing.

The laughter menaced Karl. Without humor, without sound, it was obscene. But it dominated him. It was getting late. Every passing minute brought the great moment nearer. Now he felt

that unless Gregor went he might never accomplish his plan. His anger at Gregor grew to vast proportions and out if it came the idea.

He could kill Gregor.

He looked at Gregor and he knew that he could kill him. He could kill Gregor and that would be the end of it, for as long as Gregor was alive he would not be free. Gregor would remain here through the night and he would come again and he would frustrate him with his corruption of talk. Karl looked at Gregor and he knew he could kill him.

As Karl looked Gregor raised his eyes and looked at Karl. The stiff fair eyelashes and the blue eyes, cold and intelligent like a boar's eyes, were raised slowly and slowly directed at Karl. They were full of weariness.

Then in the moment of looking Karl knew suddenly that this was what Gregor had planned. This was what Gregor had hoped to provoke. The shot that would kill Gregor would bring the whole house about him and his act would be frustrated.

He suddenly knew this.

Karl stood there looking at Gregor. Karl did not move. He was looking into those wide intelligent eyes as the hunter looks, before the fatal stroke, into the understanding eyes of the wild boar. The time that elapsed in his mind in that moment of suspense was immeasurable. It was as long as all the time he had spent in the prison camps, as long as his whole life. All the intellectuality was drained away. All the words that had passed between them, the betrayal, were now suddenly remote, abandoned like his attempt to talk with his prison comrade Pavlenko, given up for the safer, surer logic of the interior mind, the voice that was precise and incontrovertible, that had warned him, before the betrayal, of Gregor's intention.

But as Karl looked at Gregor he knew that Gregor had delayed too long. And this knowledge was imparted by the sound, almost below audibility, far away in the steely cold night, of an automobile engine.

Both men heard it and they were hushed until the sound became enlarged and could be recognized for what it was, an automobile approaching down the Route.

In that moment the old boar's eyes closed slowly and then opened. The expression was one of utter fatigue, quenched of all emotion, of hate and affection, all the loyalties and the moralities, cold and ready to close glassily forever.

Karl looked again at the window. The sound of the automobile was increasing in volume in each moment. In a few seconds it would be in position as a target.

He was once more clear minded and undeviating. Nothing could prevent him now, not even Gregor. He calculated he could kill Gregor with one short burst and before there was time for any further interference he would have brought the approaching automobile to its crashing, swaying halt. He saw this clearly in his mind and he was exalted.

He swung round at Gregor, swiftly raising the rifle and pointing it at Gregor's breast.

A fraction of a second before he pulled the trigger one of the great arms moved and a thick heavy hand gripped the rifle barrel, firmly, jerking the rifle slightly away from Karl, but keeping the muzzle pointed in the same direction. Then the rifle began to plunge and Karl was conscious of its movement before he was aware of the thunderous sound in the small room. The rifle began jerking and he could not release the trigger and all of the thirty-six rounds were swiftly expended in the heavy body before him, the nickel-plated bullets tearing away the breast and the diaphragm and the belly and the face, the great monstrous body bending up to the rifle muzzle, as though welcoming the bullets, as though thirty-six might not be sufficient to still that vast and long-lived carcass, the great thick hand gripping the rifle barrel convulsively, dearly, powerfully, falling away only when the rifle was silent leaving the acrid smell of burned flesh in the quiet cold air.

In the silence that followed the shooting, an old Red Army truck rattled past the window.

MARSHAL YAKOSOVSKY

The great hall of Saint George in the Kremlin was set for the banquet of the Anniversary of the Revolution. The gallery was screened off with huge flags, the Hammer and Sickle between the Union Jack and the Stars & Stripes. The floor was covered with fine rugs. Brilliant clusters of lights were suspended from the ornate walls.

The Generals and the Commissars stood in small groups with the foreign guests. The military uniforms with their touches of scarlet and gold and blue, the tailored backs and lean waists, the high boots that gleamed like polished metal, the many jewel-clustered orders, high stiff collars, stiff epaulettes, and braided sleeves, all this gave splendor to the ancient room. The diplomats in their darker uniforms, tight-fitting, multi-braided, with little silver dress daggers dangling from the waist added a more sober note as did the Commissars in their black tunics, but the foreigners in khaki, one in the scarlet of the Guards, others in full dress with gleaming white shirts crossed with the broad ribands of their orders, with miniature medals on their breasts, these gave the scene its traditional color. They were waiting for the *Khozin* to give the signal for the table. The *Khozin,* in a pale, pink Georgian tunic, dove grey silk breeches, and black boots, was talking with the two Ambassadors.

The handsomest man in the room, without doubt, was Marshal Yakosovsky, hero of the defense of Moscow. Tall and fair-haired, with straight back and high neck, he wore his new uniform with the air of an aristocrat. On his broad chest he wore the brilliant gem-clustered Orders of Suvorov and

Kutusov. Less ostentatious were the small, more modest Orders of Lenin and the Red Banner, which he wore above the newer acquisitions, defiantly and proudly, for they dated from the time of the Revolution and the Polish War. Marshal Yakosovsky noted that Malov had already observed the way he wore his Orders. He saw Malov looking at him. He saw the black eyes, like the lidless eyes of a snake, watching him. Marshal Yakosovsky had a fine lean face with eyes that seemed always about to wrinkle with amusement. Now as Malov looked he turned his head and calmly glanced at the three flags suspended over the gallery. There was no change in his expression, but he might have been thinking of what Lenin would have said about this.

The signal was given. The Marshals and Generals and the Diplomats and the Commissars took their places with the foreigners. The long table with its white napery and polished gold and silver plate was set with exquisite food. There were many kinds of caviar, rich fresh caviar from the Caspian, red caviar from Kamchatka. There were huge salmon fish, lying in their natural shape on long silver dishes, the pink flesh and soft white bones laid open in sections. There were many different kinds of herring, raw, salted, smoked, preserved, and fine wafers of dark smoked reindeer meat, smoked eels, sturgeon and many other kinds of fish. There were nightingales' tongues in aspic, and chicken wings, cold boiled eggs with many sauces in pretty designs on large plates, great bowls of Russian salad. There were little pickled cucumbers and other preserved vegetables and even fresh tomatoes and tangerines. There were pitchers of vodka and many kinds of glasses for the four kinds of Caucasian red wine, the Caucasian champagne, the white wines and the dark volatile Russian cognac. Waiters in white jackets hovered at the diners' elbows, ready to serve the thirty courses.

The time came for the toast to the *Khozin* and this was done with the utmost solemnity, all standing stiffly to attention, elbows at right angles, drinking their full glass of vodka in one

gulp. Then everyone applauded. The *Khozin* himself applauded bringing his good right hand down on his bad left hand. Marshal Yakosovsky looked at him, at the greying hair and mustaches, the short aging body, the saturnine smile disguising the wolf's grin. Marshal Yakosovsky was half a second late in his applause. It was noticed by Malov. He had intended that it should be noticed by Malov. With the vodka warming him he was thinking, those cockroaches, how they would like to deal with me, but they dare not yet, for I am too useful, for a long time I shall be too useful to discard, but when I am finished how they will pounce! But we shall see; once already they destroyed the Army; dare they do it again! As he thought Marshal Yakosovsky was watching the foreigners. He saw them exchange humorous glances and by intuition he knew what was in their minds; they were amused by the display. Suddenly the young Marshal Yakosovsky became austere and withdrawn and so full of pride, and contempt for the foreigners, that he was no longer amused to provide Malov, nor was he aware of his presence.

There were many more toasts. The dinner went on for many hours. It was not over until all the foreigners were drunk, until Ambassadors were talking recklessly, their white shirt fronts ruined, and the foreign military men had fallen off their chairs. By this time a hundred toasts had been honored and a hundred speeches made. In the early hours of the morning they had risen and there had been the cinema.

Marshal Yakosovsky had gone then. He had called for a car from the Kremlin garage and he had ordered the driver to Vassilevsky's place. The banquet was one thing, but he had come from the Front with much business to settle. The problem was whether Von Paulus would attempt to fight his way out of encirclement or whether he would wait for the encirclement to be broken from without. Marshal Yakosovsky had thought long about this problem. It had never been out of his mind, even during the banquet, where he had been produced as a piece of show goods, having more hair and better shoulders

than Govorov or Boldin or any of those. It was still in his mind and he was now of the opinion that Von Paulus would remain in Stalingrad and wait for reinforcement. He reckoned this because it would be nearly impossible for the German general to withdraw three hundred thousand men from his present position back over terrain where vehicles were no longer of use. Furthermore he considered that the German mind would not countenance a withdrawal. They still entertained plans of a drive northward in the spring. The Führer would order Von Paulus to stay in Stalingrad and they would send reinforcements to relieve him. They had so much contempt for the Red Army they would not realize their danger. Von Paulus might understand, having fought the Imperial Army in the last war, but the Party members would force him to act against his judgment. Their intelligence was of the poorest kind despite their photographic airplanes. They had been meeting such poor troops, in many places *shtrafnaya rota,* the gleanings of the prison camps, and because of this the Fascists thought Russia was at the end of her tether. Well, they would learn. The old Red Army and the Class of '37 were gone, the Siberians were mostly gone, those utilizable in the prison camps and the politicals were gone, but now they would meet the new young ones, the great army drawn from the Soviet workers. The tractor-drivers and the ironworkers, whose jobs had been taken over by the hardy Soviet women, would slash through the *Wehrmacht* and the great rout would begin. The marvel of it all was how the home front had held together. The world had expected Russia to fall apart and it almost had, and it would not have been surprising after the ruthlessness of the collectivizations, and 1937-38, but some miracle had saved them. No, there were no miracles; it was a system, a police system enforced relentlessly. And it was the will and the endurance of the Russian people.

These general reflections did not occupy Marshal Yakosovsky for very long. He began to think of the detail of the planning for the coming offensive. At Kalach, Von Paulus had placed his Rumanians. The Red Army would cross the Don at Sera-

fimovich and Kletskaya and would move rapidly down to Kalach in one day and the Rumanians would surrender. At the same time portions of Malinovsky's forces would cross the Volga south of Stalingrad and would move quickly across the steppe joining them from the south at Kalach. In the second and third and fourth days the ring would be strengthened with armor and heavy weapons. Meanwhile Chuikov would continue to engage Von Paulus at Stalingrad moving forces down the river at night under the cover of the high western bank and putting them in action in the Red October district at the same time maintaining his artillery fire from the island across the river. What forces could the *Wehrmacht* command get together to break into the ring? At the most six divisions with perhaps a hundred tanks. They would advance up the railroad from Kotelnikovo, but at Abganerovo, Malinovsky would intercept with his new forces brought across the Volga and gathered in the great steppe. Malinovsky would drive the Fascists back to Tchlimskaya across the Don and then they would join forces and the great sweep across to the Donbas would begin and it would not stop within the borders of Russia.

All these things were in the mind of Marshal Yakosovsky as his automobile drove on through the Moscow night. He was so occupied with his thoughts, turning over and over again in his mind the details of the great offensive that was to be launched in ten days time, that he failed for some seconds to notice that his automobile had come to a halt. His orderly had descended from the front of the car and he was roundly abusing a number of dark-clad *militsia* who stood in the street outside an apartment building. A wagon, one of the N.K.V.D. wagons, was drawn across the road in front of them and was blocking their path. The orderly was demanding that the wagon be moved at once to make way for the Marshal. While they were doing this Marshal Yakosovsky, disturbed in his line of thought, looked out of the window, saw two bodies lying on the snow-covered pavement. The bodies had been dragged from a near-by building by the *militsia* who were about to load them in

the N.K.V.D. van. There was another figure, the figure of a woman, kneeling, beating her breast and wailing over them.

"What is it?" Marshal Yakosovsky asked his orderly.

"Some criminals, sir," the orderly replied.

"What kind of criminals do we have in Moscow?"

"A deserter, sir, from the Border Guards. It seems he killed another man with an automatic rifle and then destroyed himself with a hand-grenade. The woman is his mother."

"They have arms?"

"Yes, sir, it is not uncommon now. There are many criminals in Moscow."

The Marshal's automobile drove on. The Marshal began thinking once more of the great offensive he was to lead in a few days time—an offensive that was to bereave a million Russian mothers before it was concluded.

RACHEL SEMYONOVNA

At Riazan the train stopped. Olga Trofimovna and her daughter Katya left their carriage and walked along the tracks. Olga Trofimovna and her daughter had been evacuated to a village near Chelyabinsk shortly after the war began and now they were returning to Moscow. The great offensive had begun and the enemy was retreating on all fronts and so the great danger was over. Olga Trofimovna's husband, being a People's Commissar and one of the very important men in Soviet industry, had been able to arrange for his wife and step-daughter to travel in a *wagon-lit* with a compartment to themselves. Although it was warm inside the compartment it was pleasant

whenever possible to step off the train and enjoy the sharp winter air. The snow squeaked underfoot as they walked. It was dusk and the locomotive was being refueled for the night run to Moscow. They walked along the tracks together. Then Katya saw a strange thing.

"What is it? Mama, look what is it?" she exclaimed.

"I cannot see without my glasses."

Olga Trofimovna looked quickly in the direction indicated by Katya and then turned away. She did not answer Katya.

"It looks like a company of dwarfs," Katya said. In the dusk she could see indistinctly a score of small figures on the platform of the opposite track.

"They are not dwarfs, they are people," Olga Trofimovna said. "Come, let us go back."

As they walked back Katya, looking over her shoulder, could see clearly that they were all people squatting on their haunches with their knees drawn up under their chins. They squatted silent and motionless in the gloom. Beside them on the platform were little bundles. Then Katya saw that there were two guards standing by them with rifles resting across their forearms.

When they got back to their warm compartment Katya said:

"But Mama, what is it? Why are they like that?"

"Perhaps you are too much of a child to know," Olga Trofimovna said. "If you were anyone else's daughter you would be scolded for talking too much and seeing what shouldn't be seen. Let us play checkers."

"But you have not told me, Mama," Katya said.

"For a little Russian girl you ask too many questions," Olga Trofimovna said. Then Olga sighed. It was the war which made young people ask so many questions. They were not old enough to remember and they were too young to understand.

"They are political prisoners," Olga said. "They are being taken—who knows where? To Kazakstan, perhaps? Now let us play. You will be the red and I shall be the black."

"Why are they like that?"

"It is an old Russian custom," Olga said, "which did not die out with the Romanovs."

"I have never heard of it," Katya said.

"There are many things you may not have heard about, my darling."

"Mama," Katya said, "tell me."

"Tell you what."

"Tell me what happened when they took you."

Olga looked at her daughter. It was the look which a mother gives her daughter when she realizes, for the first time, that the child has come of age. Olga was alarmed, but she did not think she could afford to be angry.

"How did you know I was taken?"

"Everyone knows, Mama. But, of course, it was a mistake. Everyone knows that too."

Olga sat back in her seat. She did not know what to say.

"Well, you *are* a child," she said, finally. "I suppose you must know some day. Yes, that was how they took me. Every-time the train stopped we had to get down like that with our knees under our chins. It is so that no one can run away. To stand up is to be shot. Really, it is nothing."

Katya could not imagine it. Poor Mama! Who could imagine Mama squatting like that! It was so funny! Poor fat Mama who liked cigarettes and pretty things and strange men. How could Mama bend down like that? It was really funny.

"Darling Mama," Katya said, "how was it? How was it like to be taken?"

"Nothing, child. It was not so bad. It is all forgotten now. I never think of it. So let us play."

"Never think of it?"

"Katya, you are a little fool. Never!"

Olga watched the checkerboard as though she were immersed in the game. Imagine *my* child, she was thinking. Having to answer *her* questions. It is wrong to have to answer such questions. And they will never believe it was not so bad. That, in truth, I don't care. That I care for nothing, except,

perhaps those nights in the isolator and the screams of the women. Olga's hand touched her breast. The touch quieted the feeling of twisting . . .

"Look!" Katya cried.

The train was moving. The *wagon-lit* was slowly drawing past the platform on the opposite track. Katya rubbed the moisture from the window and looked out. The light from the window was shed down on the squatting prisoners. Olga, glancing out of the window, looked into the sorrow-stained face, just then illumed, of Rachel Semyonovna Romantsiev.

LIZAVETTA PETROVNA

My dearest Sasha (Lizavetta wrote), You will be much astonished to hear from me after all these years. I write to tell you that I am alive and well. I have thought to tell you this because you are now the only one left to me and a kind foreign gentleman who has made my acquaintance has promised to send the letter so that it will reach you.

My dear boy, some of what I have to tell you is very sad, but you will know because it is the war. I have with sorrow to tell you that our great friend Karl is dead and that Rachel has gone away and we do not know anything of Ivan who went to the front a year ago. Dreadful things happened to Karl (because of this war) so that Rachel and Karl were half-crazy. In truth I think now that they were crazy. They were like that and so perhaps it is better the way it is. It is better to be dead than to suffer so much and to be a danger to everyone. For me I have now the Church and it is my enduring comfort.

I do not know if I have sinned greatly in the eyes of God, but always I pray for guidance. I think that I was right to tell Gregor and to bring him to our little room. Only I did not know how it was also with him. But now he is dead too and anyway you do not know him. I do know that I was wrong to bring in the American girl, thinking that because she spoke English she would help, but I should have known that foreigners will never understand us Russians. It has been a terrible year. But I must not weep too much with you. You are my brother and you are a Russian although you are an American too. I must tell you with pride that we often hear of your exploits on the African continent. But now all goes well with our war too and soon the Fascist invaders will be driven out. Life is better.

Do you know, my darling, that I am a mother? No, not a real mother. But I have now four adopted children, Lena, Sasha (I tell myself he is named for you), Babka, and tiny Annusha who is fourteen months old. They are the children of a neighbor who has died in the war. We all live together in the basement room of our big apartment building and we have such good times together. There is not always so much to eat for so many hungry mouths, but we also have a *Babushka* who waits in queues for us. And I work very hard. I make dolls for the peasants. I would like to make little animals as I used to do, but now such animals are forbidden and I must make dolls. The dolls are not so easy to sell to the peasants because we never have enough things to make them pretty. If only we had some ribbons and some buttons. Ribbons! Do you think you could send me some ribbons? No, it is only a dream I sometimes have as I sit here at my sewing. My Lena is learning to sew too and soon she will be as quick as I am and then we will have twice as much money and always have food to eat. Perhaps if you could send something it should be shoes, or noodles, or food of some kind. But, no, dear Sasha, please do not send anything, please do not even write to me. It is better.

I wanted to say to you that we are now winning the war and to give you confidence in the fighting. You cannot write to me, but some day, who knows, we may meet again, I hope. God be with you and protect you always, your loving sister, Lizavetta.

FERGUSON

They were drinking something called a gimlet down here, but I asked for a whisky-and-soda. This was the third day I had stood at the bar at Shepheards not knowing anything better than to be able to drink whisky. I was picking up my glass when I saw this little man come into the bar. I noticed him because he was the only other civilian. It was unusual for a civilian to be in the bar at Shepheards. Almost all the time there were men in uniform. A husky lot, bronzed by the sun, tall, well-fed, they come into Cairo on short leave from the desert. They call the Fascists "Jerries." It seems there are eleven divisions of Jerries. There was a time when they were hard pressed by the Jerries, but now the Jerries are on the run. These men come into the bar and talk about it freely. I hear them say hard critical things about their general even though his tactics have made the Jerries run. Some of them wear short pants like boy scouts, others wear brown corduroys and polka-dot scarves in the necks of their khaki tunics. They look like good fighting men and they have style. They go into the winter-garden and clap their hands and shout "Hassan," and the fez-topped Sudanese comes over to take the order for a gimlet or a Pym's or whatever it is. They are officers; no men

are allowed in here. I haven't spoken to any of them. Sometimes they glance at me with the kind of look I guess they reserve for civilians. That is why I noticed this little man who came into the bar. He was a civilian like myself. There was something familiar about his clothes, nothing distinctive about the cloth or the cut, but worn without style, as though garments are things you reluctantly put on in the morning. I was not sure whether to open a conversation with him.

My first conversation down here was a failure. It was with an Englishman who had been to Moscow. The word Moscow was what brought us together. He had been impressed by the flight down from Moscow to Baku. He had been particularly interested to see Baku, he said. Had I noticed the oil field as I drove in from the airfield? I had. Did I notice, he said, that not one per cent of the wells were working? I hadn't noticed it, but you can see the same thing in California. No, he says, at Baku the field is exhausted. We had it after the last war so we should know. But the Soviets, he said, are inefficient producers. It stands to reason, he said, you can't expect to have efficient engineering when you shoot your engineers for trivial infractions of Party rules. "Mark my words," this Englishman said, "they need oil and they will be coming south for it." "Oh Christ," I said, "let's not fight the next war yet. Let's get this bloody thing over first." Then I added, "Any attack on Russia will be a Fascist attack." I don't know why I said that, but I offended him deeply. You always offend them deeply. That was why I hesitated to begin a conversation with this little man who had come into the bar. But, certainly, it had been an interesting flight down from Moscow. (No one had ever had his ticket and visa with such dispatch.) We flew by way of Kuibyshev and Uralsk and across the sunny Caspian to Baku. The best bit of luck had been getting this lift from Teheran to Cairo. An American general brought me down in his personal Lodestar. He was a Southerner with a nice drawl. I was out at the airport begging a place on a British plane when the general said, "Going to Cairo?" as if it were a block

or two away. "Step in. We're going the same way." He was very courteous and, of course, we got to talking about Russia. He was all for mutual understanding and so on. But just at the moment, he confided, he was goddam sore with the Russians because of the way they were handling their end of the supply line across Persia. It seems that the Lend-Lease aircraft are stacking up at Teheran airport because the Russians haven't enough pilots to fly them into Russia, but instead of letting American pilots fly them in, or frankly admitting their difficulty, the local Russian commander goes along the line of planes and refuses to take delivery of any but the exact number for which he has pilots available, rejecting the other planes on account of some minor technical reason, a slack pin, a loose nut, a paint scratch. "Don't you see," I said gently, "the Russian commander would have to stand the rap for sabotage if he admitted to you he couldn't take delivery. He's in a spot, but he's an expert, so he finds technical reasons. You have to sympathize with him if you want to understand the Russians." "Well, boy," the American general said, "I've never done business that way in my life. And I'm not beginning now." "Isn't it because you're a little piqued?" I said. "Wouldn't you rather like to get up and tell the world you were delivering more stuff than the Russians could use?" "No, son, you've got me wrong." He gave me the kind of look they keep for liberals in his home state and the conversation languished.

The conversation always languishes. They are charming. They couldn't be more polite or courteous. But they don't know anything. I can't talk to them so I stand in the bar and drink whisky. The barman keeps my bottle under the counter. I feel civilized drinking whisky instead of vodka. I feel that at last I am back in civilization. Then I remember what I have seen of Cairo in these two mornings when I haven't been able to sleep because of the heat: the skinny-legged children out at the railway tracks sifting sand for grains of wheat fallen from the sacks; babies competing with the fat floppy vultures for street refuse; the abject squalor of the native quarter and the

hopeless poverty and the dull ugly depravity: and out at Garden City the palatial new apartment houses, the beautiful villas along the Nile, the luxurious Gazira Club, Groppy's and these Gyppy dance joints. My God, maybe communism is the answer! And if I had communism here wouldn't I need a secret police to deal with all the subversive elements who would be plotting to bring back the old order? You're crazy! Oh hell, why think about it? I used not to think about it. All the time I was looking at this little man in civilian clothes. You have guessed why, of course. He was a Russian. I couldn't be mistaken. I couldn't mistake that kind of face or that garb.

I went over to him at last.

"Pardon me," I said, "aren't you Russian?"

"Yes," he said. He explained he was the *Tass* representative here.

Sure I knew *Tass*. I said I had been up in Moscow only four days ago.

He smiled at me, smiled all over his face, happily and eagerly, and I was reminded of Mitka, and delighted. I remembered my Russian and we talked for a few minutes. He said he had been away a long time, he hesitated, he didn't say precisely how long. His eyes had brightened for a moment and now they faded. I saw the distant look come into his face, the austerity, as though he were looking over my shoulder at something far away in the distance. The conversation languished. In a few minutes he excused himself politely and went away.

I understood. I knew about *Tass*. And I suppose he knew I knew. I supposed he had a wife or mother up there. He had to be careful. Being a Russian it was very easy for him to warm to proffered friendship. So he had to be careful from the beginning.

Oh, Christ! I went up to my room and took my clothes off and lay on the bed. It was damned hot. I thought of a change of underclothes, but I had left all my stuff in a suitcase at the Feodowsi in Teheran. It was either that or miss the opportunity

for a quick passage with the American general. I remembered that the scenario was in the suitcase. There was no *Tarakanishche,* but there had been Karl's script.

Oh well, what was the matter with me? Was it true as Mitka had said that after some time one gets this Russophilia?

It was not Russia that was the matter with me, not exactly.

Oh, Vitalia, how long this century!

MITKA

It was the first day of summer. It was already warm when the patrol left the village. The lieutenant marched in front and the eleven men followed in single file. The lieutenant led them into a wood where it was cool and you could hear the dry twigs breaking underfoot. Under the shady banks and on the north side of the trees there was still a little snow. It was only a small wood and it gave out onto a large grassy down. The men marched behind the lieutenant across the down. The grass was almost ankle high and there were many early summer flowers, some primroses still, and bluebells. Mitka picked some bluebells and threaded them through the bayonet socket of his rifle. None of the men was talking, but some behind Mitka also picked flowers which they wound around their rifles. It was warm and the men were sweating. They still wore their winter clothes.

After marching for an hour the lieutenant rested his men beside a stream. He wanted to rest himself and there was no political officer with the party. He rested for ten minutes. After that they went on over the wide down. The country was

the undulating steppeland of the South. They could hear the sound of gunfire in the distance. Mitka took some sunflower seeds from his pocket and began to munch them, spitting out the husks. Another man was chewing a turnip he had found near the village.

The patrol had crossed the wide down and had come to a wood. As they approached the wood the lieutenant stopped. He could hear the sound of an airplane. The airplane sounded close to them, but the lieutenant could not see it. Mitka had heard many such airplanes. He stepped out of the file and began to unbuckle his trousers. He had wanted to do this for the last hour and now was a convenient moment. Then suddenly the airplane came over the tops of the trees in front of the patrol. It was a Messerschmitt. It was throttled down but the engine made a huge sound. They could see the pilot quite clearly. The sun glinted on his goggles as he turned his head and looked at the patrol. The patrol stood and stared back at the pilot. Then Mitka did a funny thing. He turned around and bent down and showed his bare arse at the Fascist. It was a big white arse and it was a very insulting gesture. The Fascist saw it and suddenly the engine of his airplane accelerated. The air-shaking roar enveloped the patrol and put fear into the heart of every man. The lieutenant ran into the wood and his men followed him. All except Mitka.

Mitka stood there petrified. He was holding up his trousers with his forearms. The pilot pulled his airplane up into a sharp stall turn and, with the engine roaring so that the very leaves in the trees began to shake, he dived back toward the edge of the wood. Mitka began to run. Instead of running into the wood he ran out onto the steppe. The Fascist began firing as he ran and the lieutenant and his men could see the flame from the cannon flow back over the spinner like a catherine wheel. But the airplane was too fast and the pilot could not maneuver it properly with the wood there. Mitka was still running. He was running straight out into the steppe.

The lieutenant shouted to him, but nobody heard the lieutenant because of the noise of the engine.

The pilot stall-turned again and came back at Mitka. This time he aimed his plane carefully. He came down in a straight shallow dive at Mitka, holding his fire. Then he began to fire. But Mitka, running like a hare, turned sharply at right angles to the airplane. The men in the wood could see the turf thrown up by the cannon shells striking almost at Mitka's heels.

This time the pilot made a high Immelman turn. He was high above the down. Mitka was still running and to the pilot he must have seemed like a fly on a green baize cloth. The pilot then dived his plane, taking long aim at Mitka. This time he used his machine guns and the men in the wood could see the tracer bullets strike down on all sides of Mitka like a magic shower. But Mitka was like a madman. All the time he was running farther and farther away across the steppe.

The pilot pulled out of the dive which carried him away into the distance like a kite. Well, it is over, thought the lieutenant. He was sweating. He began to shout at his men. "Why do you do nothing?" he shouted. "Why do you not make a volley with your rifles? Are you men of wood? There is your comrade being killed and you do nothing." Then, as the lieutenant spoke, all heard again the growing sound of the airplane engine. The Messerschmitt was coming back.

Far out on the steppe the figure of Mitka could be seen. He was still running. This time the Fascist brought his airplane down so low the slipstream whipped up the grass. Then he opened his machine guns. He began to fire almost at the level of a man's shoulder, slightly swinging his airplane, as a machine-gunner may swing the barrel of his gun, so as to spread his fire. Then suddenly Mitka disappeared. The men in the wood could see him no longer.

The Fascist pulled up into a climb, circled the down, gently rocking the wings of his airplane, and flew out westward and was gone. When the airplane could not be heard any longer the

lieutenant led his patrol out into the down. The men marched behind one another silently. Sometimes the lieutenant would pause and listen and the line of men would crowd up on one another. Then he ordered his men to spread out. They could not find Mitka. They expected that the grass would hide his body. But not for long. They expected to find it after a short search. They looked everywhere, but they could see no sign of Mitka.

Then one of the men heard a cry. At first he thought it was the man next to him. But then his comrades heard it also. They came together and they found Mitka. He was hidden under a tiny ledge of earth made by a rivulet of water during the thaw. At first Mitka would not get up.

"Has he gone?" he said, "Has the son of a bitch gone away?"

His comrades, crowding around him, laughed and pulled him out.

"You have ruined your breeches," the lieutenant said. "You should take some grass and clean them. As it is you stink."

"The son of bitch," was all Mitka said. "The dirty Fascist son of bitch."

He was so excited he said it in English, but none of his comrades heard him. All the men lay down in the sun among the grass and flowers and laughed at Mitka while he took off his breeches and with a big fistful of grass began cleaning them. All the time his arse shone up at the sun like a big cleft moon.

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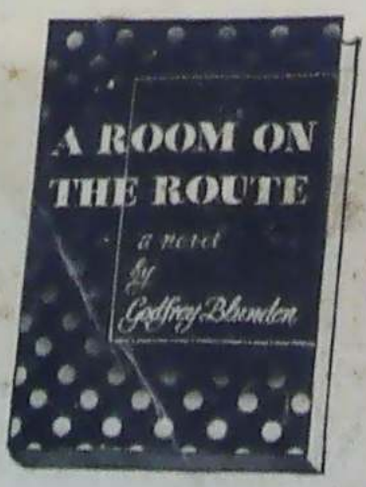

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